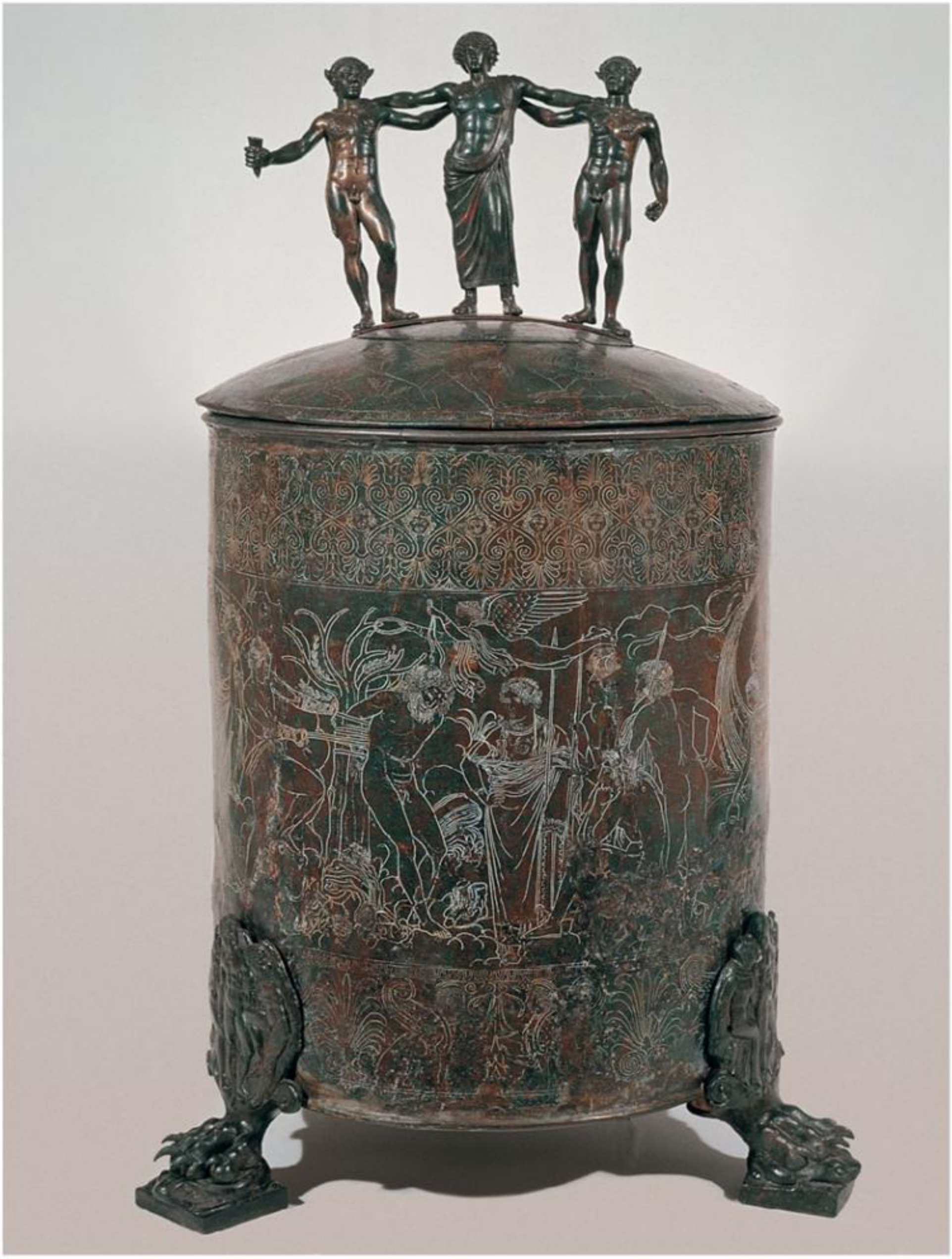
6

CHAPTER

Etruscan and Roman Art



6–1 • Novios Plautios THE FICORONI CISTA
350–300 BCE. Bronze, height 2′6¼″ (78.6 cm). Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia, Rome.

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CHAPTER

Etruscan and Roman Art

Long before the Romans ruled the entire Italic peninsula as the center of an expanding empire, the Etruscans created a thriving culture in northern and central Italy. Etruscan artists were known throughout the Mediterranean world for their special sophistication in casting and engraving on bronze. Some of their most extraordinary works were created for domestic use, including a group of surviving **cistae**—cylindrical containers used by wealthy women as cases for toiletry articles such as mirrors, cosmetics, and perfume.

This exquisitely wrought and richly decorated example—**THE FICORONI CISTA**, named after an eighteenth-century owner—was made in the second half of the fourth century BCE and excavated in Palestrina (**FIG. 6–1**). It was commissioned by an Etruscan woman named Dindia Macolnia as a gift for her daughter, perhaps on the occasion of her marriage. The artist Novios Plautios signed the precisely engraved drawings around the cylinder, accomplished while the hammered bronze sheet from which it was constructed was still flat. First he incised lines within the metal and then filled them with a white substance to make them stand out. The cista's legs and handle—created by the figural group of Dionysus between two satyrs—were cast as separate pieces, attached during the assembly process.

The natural poses and individualization of these figures—both incised and cast—recalls the relaxed but lively naturalism of Etruscan wall paintings, but the Classicizing idealization of bodies and poses seems to come directly from contemporary Greek art. Furthermore, the use of broad foliate and ornamental bands to frame the frieze of figural narrative running around the cylinder matches the practice of famous Greek ceramic painters like Euphronios (see "A Closer Look," page 119). As with Greek pots, the most popular subjects for cistae were Greek myths. Here Novios has engraved sequential scenes drawn from an episode in the story of the Argonauts' quest for the Golden Fleece. The sailors sought water in the land of King Amykos, but the hostile king would only give them water from his spring if they beat him in a boxing match. After the immortal Pollux defeated Amykos, the Argonauts tied the king to a tree, the episode highlighted on the side of the cista seen here.

Novios Plautios probably based this scene on a monumental, mid-fourth-century BCE Greek painting of the Argonauts by Kydias that seems to have been in Rome at this time—perhaps explaining why the artist tells us in his incised signature that he executed this work in Rome. The combination of cultural components coming together in the creation of this cista—Greek stylistic sources in the work of an Etruscan artist living in Rome—will continue as Roman art develops out of the native heritage of Etruria and the emulation of the imported Classical heritage of the Greeks.

LEARN ABOUT IT

6.1 Explore the various ways Romans embellished the walls and floors of their houses with illusionistic painting in fresco and mosaic.

6.2 Trace the development and use of portraiture as a major artistic theme for the ancient Romans.

6.3 Examine the ways that Etruscan funerary art celebrates the vitality of human existence.

6.4 Investigate how knowledge of Roman advances in structural technology furthers our understanding of Roman civic architecture.

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THE ETRUSCANS

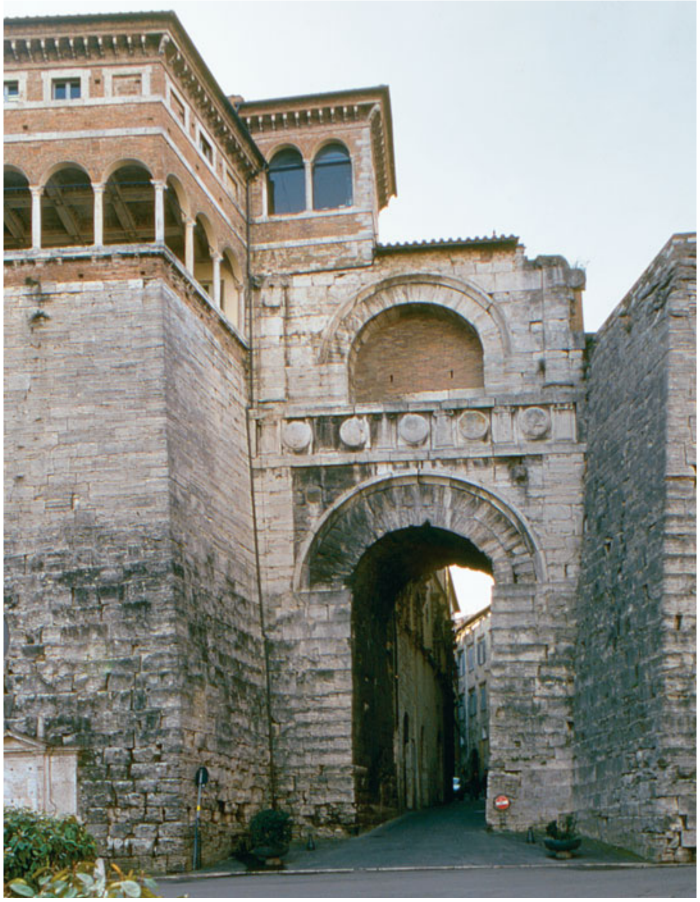
At the end of the Bronze Age (about 1000 BCE), a central European people known as the Villanovans occupied the northern and western regions of the boot-shaped Italian peninsula, while the central area was home to people who spoke a closely related group of Italic languages, Latin among them. Beginning in the eighth century BCE, Greeks established colonies on the Italian mainland and in Sicily. From the seventh century BCE, people known as Etruscans, probably related to the Villanovans, gained control of the north and much of today's central Italy, an area known as Etruria. They reached the height of their power in the sixth century BCE, when they expanded into the Po River valley to the north and the Campania region to the south (**MAP 6–1**).

Etruscan wealth came from fertile soil and an abundance of metal ore. Besides being farmers and metalworkers, the Etruscans were also sailors and merchants, and they exploited their resources in trade with the Greeks and with other people of the eastern Mediterranean. Etruscan artists knew and drew inspiration from Greek and Near Eastern art, assimilating such influences to create a distinctive Etruscan style.

ETRUSCAN ARCHITECTURE

In architecture, the Etruscans established patterns of building that would be adopted later by the Romans. Cities were laid out on grid plans, like cities in Egypt and Greece, but more regularly. Two main streets—one usually running north–south and the other east–west—divided the city into quarters, with the town's business district centered at their intersection. We know something about Etruscan domestic architecture within these quarters, because they created house-shaped funerary urns and also decorated the interiors of tombs to resemble houses. Dwellings were designed around a central courtyard (or **atrium**) that was open to the sky, with a pool or cistern fed by rainwater.

Walls with protective gates and towers surrounded Etruscan cities. The third- to second-century BCE city gate of Perugia, called the **PORTA AUGUSTA**, is one of the few surviving examples of Etruscan monumental architecture (**FIG. 6–2**). A tunnel-like passageway between two huge towers, this gate is significant for anticipating the Roman use of the round arch, which is here extended to create a semicircular barrel vault over the passageway (see "The Roman Arch," page 170, and "Roman Vaulting," page 187). A square frame surmounted by a horizontal decorative element resembling an entablature sets off the entrance arch, which is accentuated by a molding. The decorative section is filled with a row of circular panels, or **roundels**, alternating with rectangular, columnlike upright strips called **pilasters** in an effect reminiscent of the Greek Doric frieze.



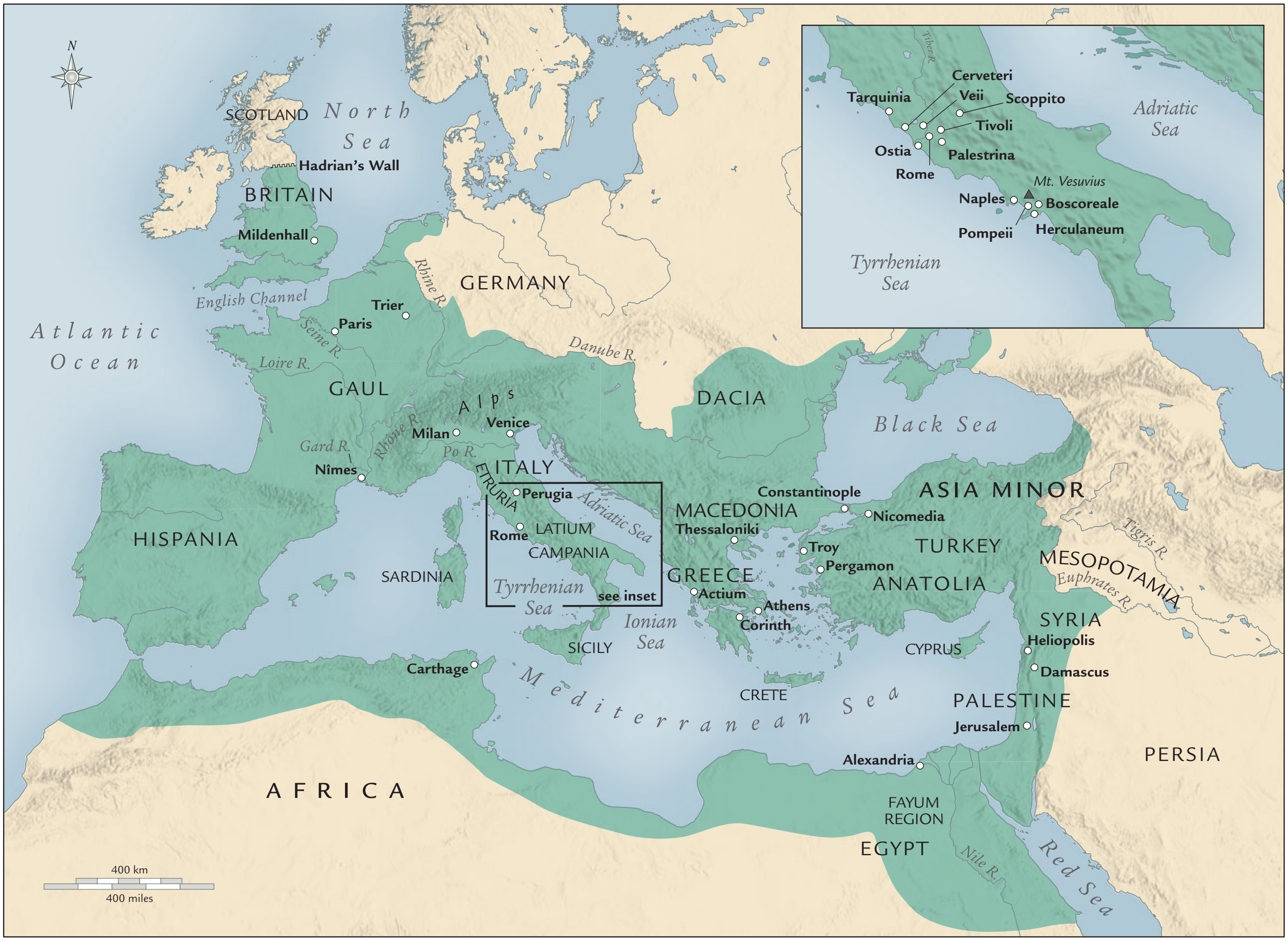
6–2 • PORTA AUGUSTA
Perugia, Italy. 3rd–2nd century BCE.

ETRUSCAN TEMPLES

The Etruscans incorporated Greek deities and heroes into their pantheon and, like the ancient Mesopotamians, used divination to predict future events. Beyond this and their burial practices (as revealed by the findings in their tombs), we know little about their religious beliefs. Our knowledge of the appearance of Etruscan temples comes from a few excavated foundations, from ceramic votive models, and from the later writings of the Roman architect Vitruvius, who compiled, sometime between 33 and 23 BCE, descriptions of the nature of Etruscan architecture (see "Roman Writers on Art," page 167).

Etruscans built their temples with mud-brick walls; columns and entablatures were made of wood or a quarried volcanic rock (tufo) that hardens upon exposure to air. Vitruvius indicates that like the Greeks, Etruscan builders also used the post-and-lintel structure and gable roofs, with bases, column shafts, and capitals recalling the Doric or Ionic order, and entablatures resembling a Doric frieze (**FIG. 6–3**). Vitruvius used the term "**Tuscan order**" to describe the characteristic Etruscan variation of Doric, with an unfluted shaft and simplified base, capital, and entablature (see "Roman Architectural Orders," page 161).

Like the Greeks, the Etruscans built rectangular temples on a high platform, but often imbedded them within urban settings. Rather than surrounding temples uniformly on all sides with a stepped stereobate and peristyle colonnade, as was the practice in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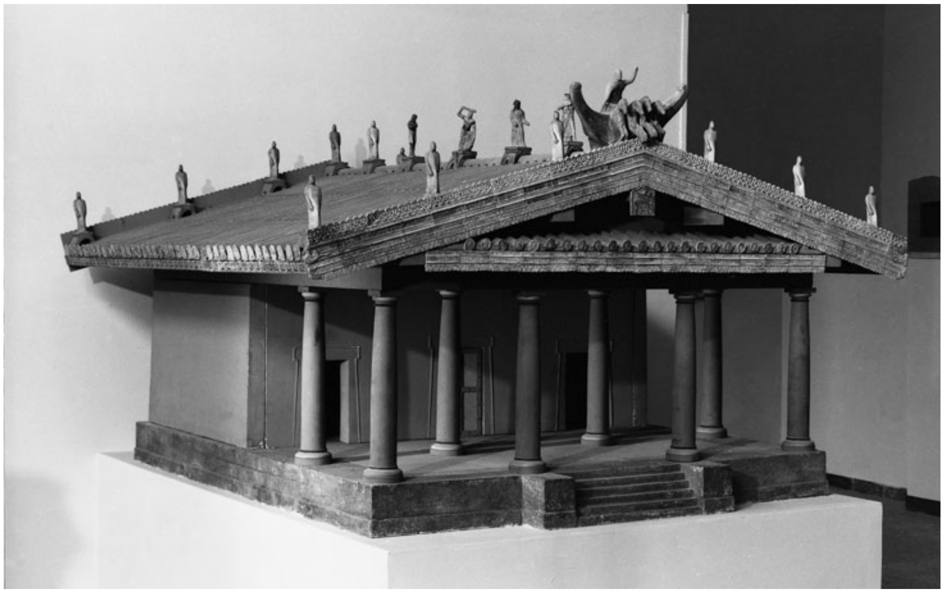
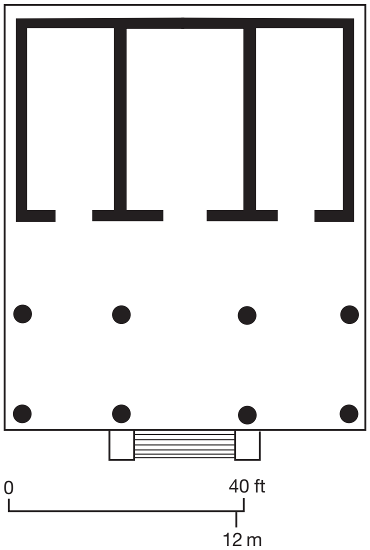
SCOTLAND
North Sea
Hadrian's Wall
BRITAIN
Mildenhall
English Channel
Atlantic Ocean
Rhine R.
GERMANY
Trier
Paris
Seine R.
Loire R.
GAUL
Danube R.
Alps
DACIA
Black Sea
Milan
Venice
Rhone R.
Gard R.
Po R.
Nîmes
ITALY
ETRURIA
Perugia
Adriatic Sea
Rome
LATIUM
CAMPANIA
HISPANIA
SARDINIA
Tyrrhenian Sea
see inset
Constantinople
Nicomedia
ASIA MINOR
MACEDONIA
Thessaloniki
Troy
Pergamon
TURKEY
ANATOLIA
GREECE
Actium
Athens
Corinth
Ionian Sea
SICILY
Carthage
Mediterranean Sea
CRETE
CYPRUS
Tigris R.
MESOPOTAMIA
Euphrates R.
SYRIA
Heliopolis
Damascus
PALESTINE
Jerusalem
Alexandria
PERSIA
AFRICA
FAYUM REGION
EGYPT
Nile R.
Red Sea
400 km
400 miles
Tiber R.
Cerveteri
Tarquinia
Veii
Scoppito
Tivoli
Ostia
Palestrina
Rome
Mt. Vesuvius
Naples
Boscoreale
Pompeii
Herculaneum
Adriatic Sea
Tyrrhenian Sea

MAP 6–1 • THE ANCIENT ROMAN WORLD

This map shows the Roman Empire at its greatest extent, which was reached in 106 CE under the emperor Trajan.





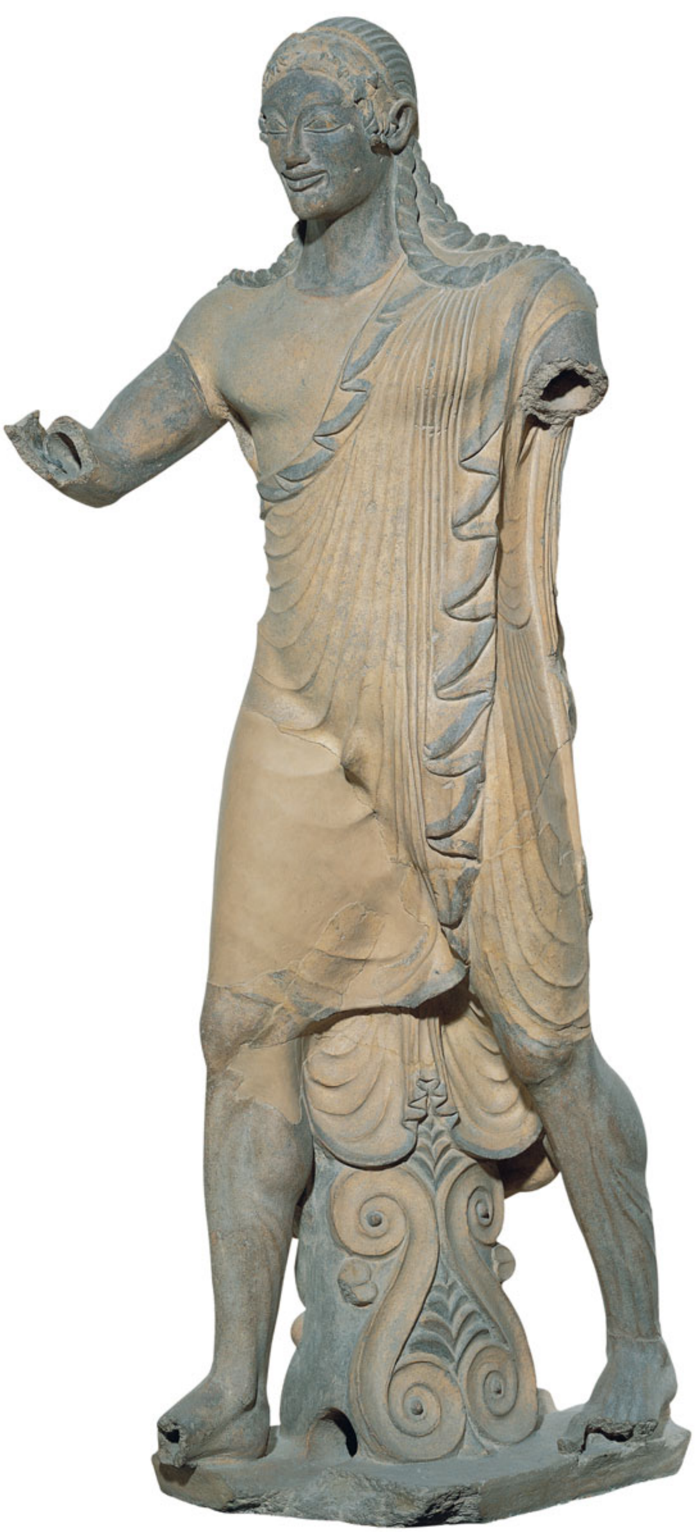
6–3 • MODEL (A) AND PLAN (B) OF AN ETRUSCAN TEMPLE
Based on descriptions by Vitruvius.

Greece (see FIGS. 5–10, 5–36), Etruscans built a single flight of stairs leading to a columned porch on one short side. An approach to siting and orientation also constitutes an important difference from Greek temples, which were built toward the center of an enclosed sacred precinct (see FIGS. 5–12, 5–36), rather than on the edge of a courtyard or public square. Also, there was an almost even division in Etruscan temples between porch and interior space, which was often divided into three rooms, presumably for cult statues (see FIG. 6–3B).

Although Etruscan temples were simple in form, they were embellished with dazzling displays of painting and terra-cotta sculpture. The temple roof, rather than the pediment, served as a base for large statue groups. Etruscan artists excelled at the imposing technical challenge of making huge terra-cotta figures for placement on temples. A splendid example is a life-size figure of **APOLLO** (**FIG. 6–4**). To make such large clay sculptures, artists had to know how to construct figures so that they did not collapse under their own weight while the raw clay was still wet. They also had to regulate the kiln temperature during the long firing process. The names of some Etruscan terra-cotta artists have come down to us, including that of a sculptor from Veii (near Rome) called Vulca, in whose workshop this figure of Apollo may have been created.

Dating from about 510–500 BCE and originally part of a four-figure scene depicting one of the labors of Hercules, this boldly striding Apollo comes from the temple dedicated to Minerva and other gods in the sanctuary of Portonaccio at Veii. Four figures on the temple's ridgepole (horizontal beam at the peak of the roof) depicted Apollo and Hercules fighting for possession of a deer sacred to Diana, while she and Mercury looked on.

Apollo's well-developed body and his "Archaic smile" clearly demonstrate that Etruscan sculptors were familiar with the *kouroi* of their Archaic Greek counterparts. But a comparison of the Apollo and a figure such as the Greek Anavysos Kouros (see FIG. 5–20) reveals telling differences. Unlike the Greek *kouros*, the body of the Etruscan Apollo is partially concealed by a rippling robe that cascades in knife-edged pleats to his knees. The forward-moving pose of the Etruscan statue also has a dynamic vigor that is avoided in the balanced, rigid stance of the Greek figure. This sense of energy expressed in purposeful movement is a defining characteristic of Etruscan sculpture and painting.



6–4 • Master Sculptor Vulca (?) APOLLO
From the temple of Minerva, Portonaccio, Veii. c. 510–500 BCE. Painted terra cotta, height 5′10″ (1.8 m). Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia, Rome.

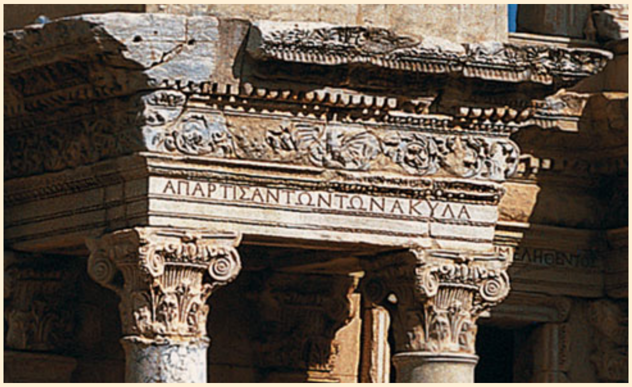
TOMB CHAMBERS

Like the Egyptians, the Etruscans seem to have conceived tombs as homes for the dead. The Etruscan cemetery of La Banditaccia at Cerveteri, in fact, was laid out as a small town, with "streets" running between the grave mounds. The tomb chambers were partially or entirely excavated below the ground, and some were hewn out of bedrock. They were roofed over, sometimes with corbel vaulting, and covered with dirt and stones.

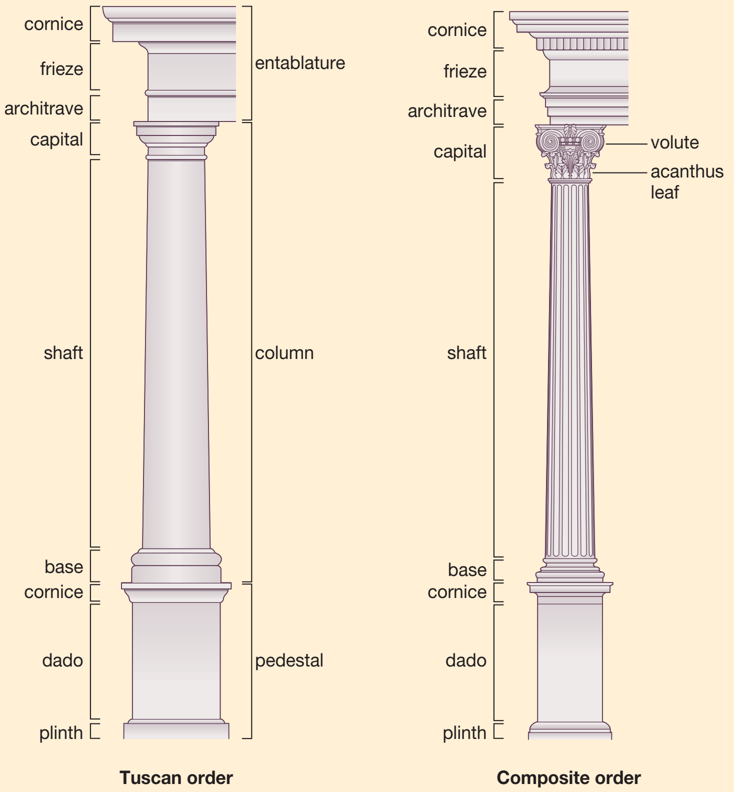
Etruscan painters had a remarkable ability to envision their subjects inhabiting a bright, tangible world just beyond the tomb. Vividly colored scenes of playing, feasting, dancing, hunting, fishing, and other leisure activities decorated the walls. In a late sixth-century BCE tomb from Tarquinia, wall paintings show two boys spending a day in the country, surrounded by the graceful flights of brightly colored birds (**FIG. 6–6**). The boy to the left is climbing a hillside to the promontory of a cliff, soon to put aside

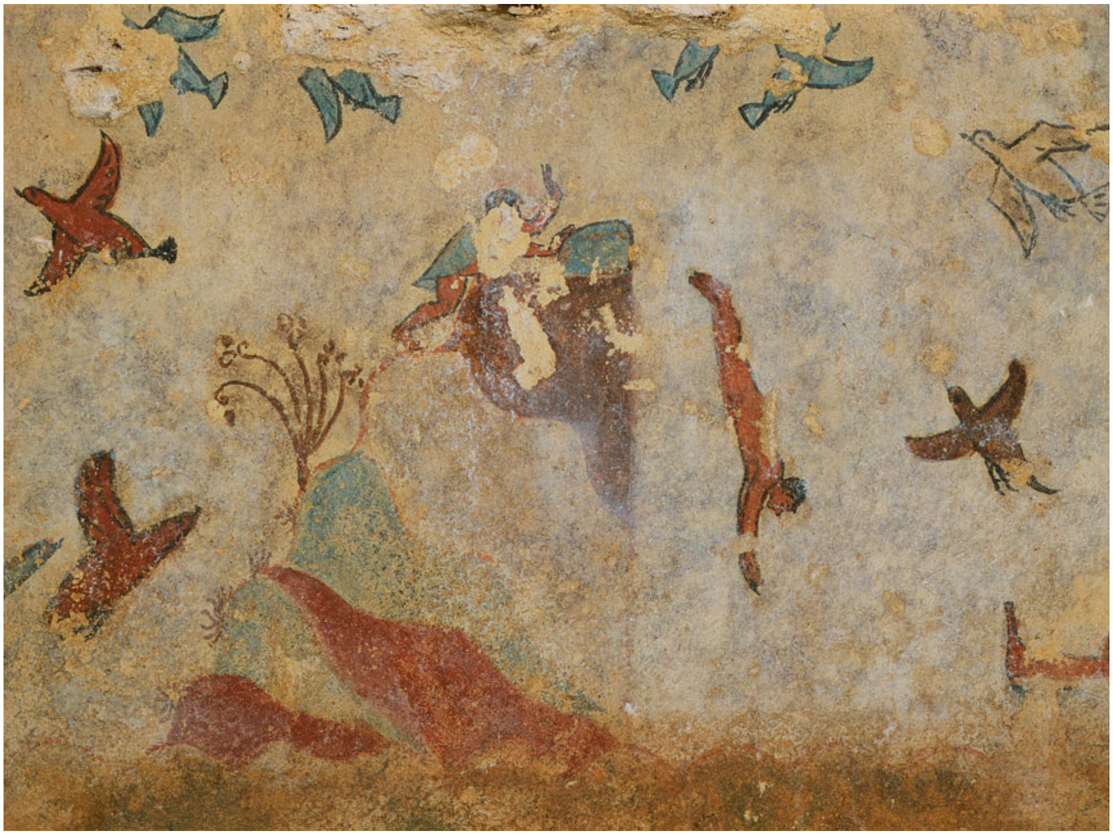
ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE | Roman Architectural Orders

The Etruscans and Romans adapted Greek architectural orders (see "The Greek Orders," page 110) to their own tastes, often using them as applied decoration on walls. The Etruscans developed the Tuscan order by modifying the Doric order, adding a base under the shaft, which was often left unfluted. This system was subsequently adopted by the Romans. Later, the Romans created the **Composite order** (**FIG. 6–5**) by combining the volutes of Greek Ionic capitals with the acanthus leaves from the Corinthian order. In this diagram, the two Roman orders are shown on pedestals, which consist of a **plinth**, a **dado**, and a cornice.

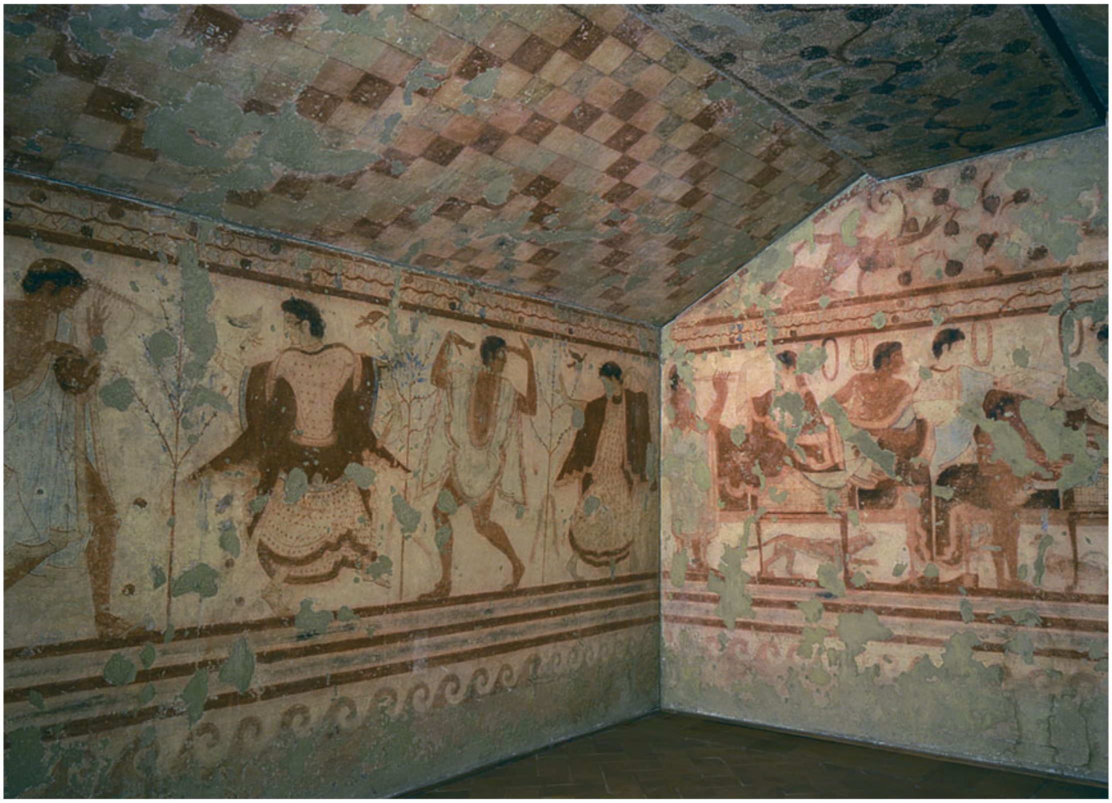

ΑΠΑΡΤΙΣΑΝΤΩΝΤΩΝΑΚΥΛΑ

6–5 • FAÇADE OF LIBRARY OF CELSUS, EPHESUS
Modern Turkey. Detail showing capital, architrave, frieze, and cornice, conforming to the Composite order. 135 CE. Marble.

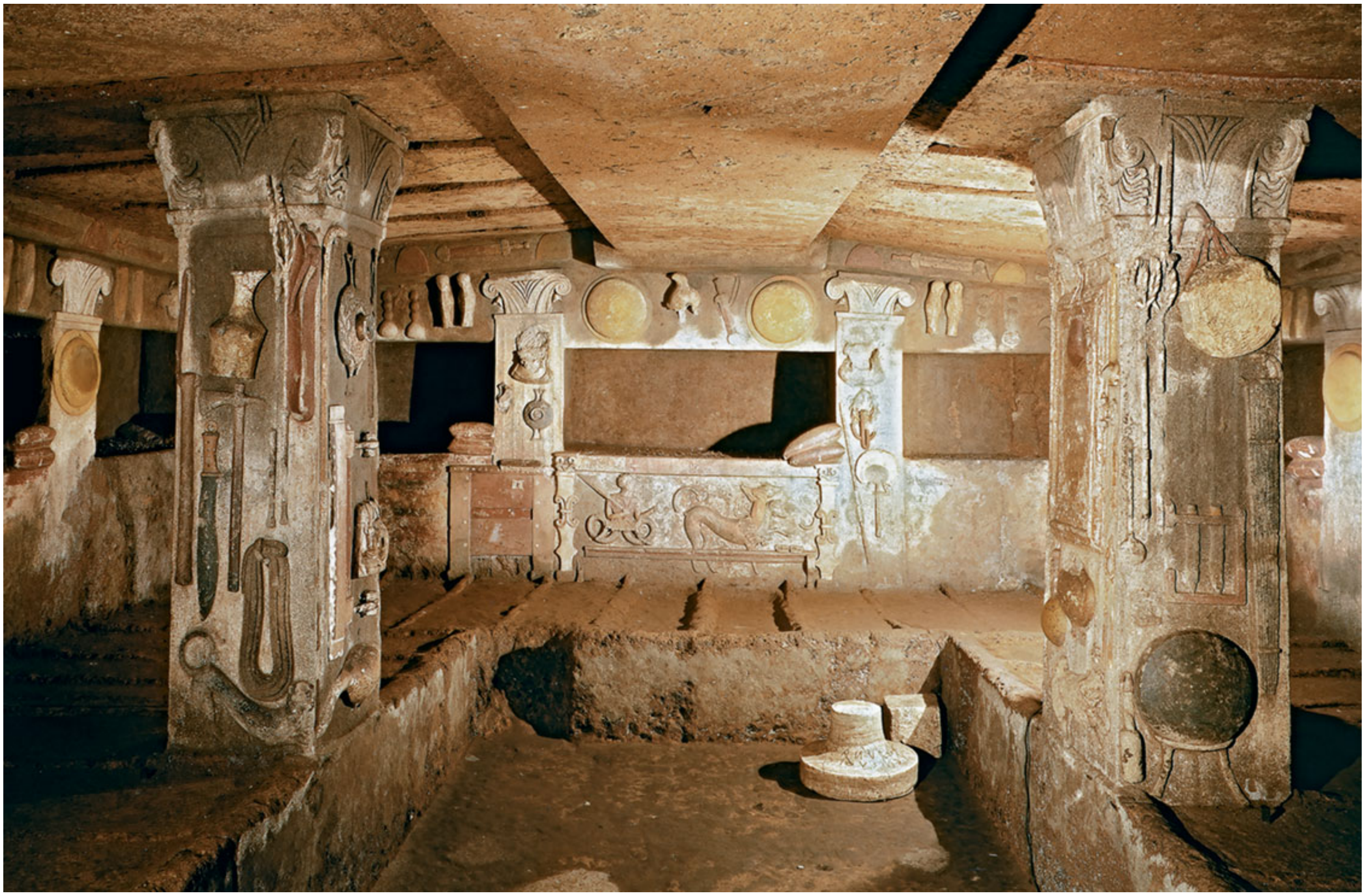

cornice
frieze
architrave
capital
shaft
base
cornice
dado
plinth
entablature
column
pedestal
Tuscan order
cornice
frieze
architrave
capital
volute
acanthus leaf
shaft
base
cornice
dado
plinth
Composite order



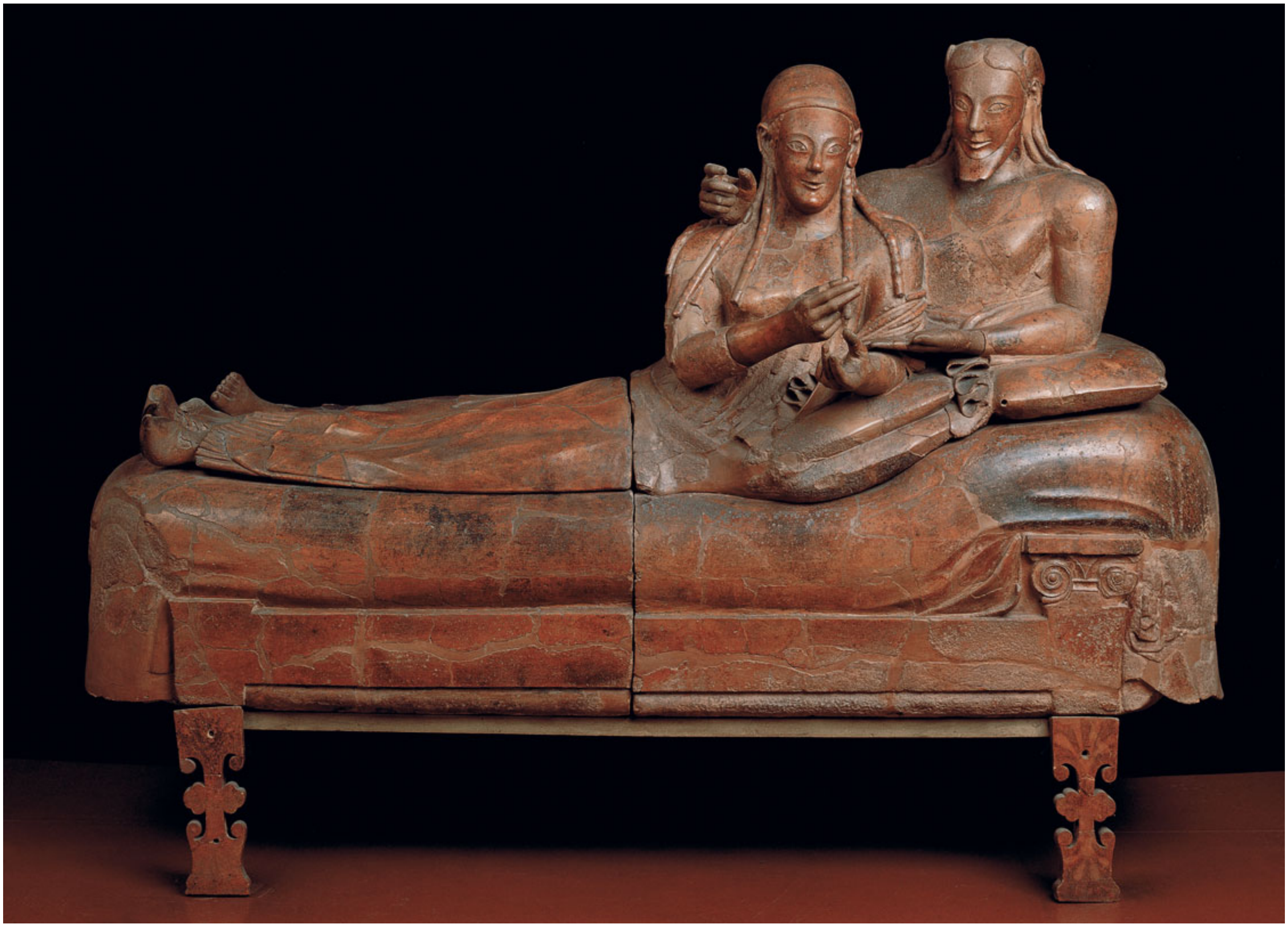
6–6 • BOYS CLIMBING ROCKS AND DIVING, TOMB OF HUNTING AND FISHING
Tarquinia, Italy. Late 6th century BCE.



6–7 • DANCERS AND DINERS, TOMB OF THE TRICLINIUM
Tarquinia, Italy. c. 480–470 BCE.



6–8 • BURIAL CHAMBER, TOMB OF THE RELIEFS
Cerveteri, Italy. 3rd century BCE.



6-9 • RECLINING COUPLE ON A SARCOPHAGUS FROM CERVETERI
c. 520 BCE. Terra cotta, length 6′7″ (2.06 m). Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia, Rome.

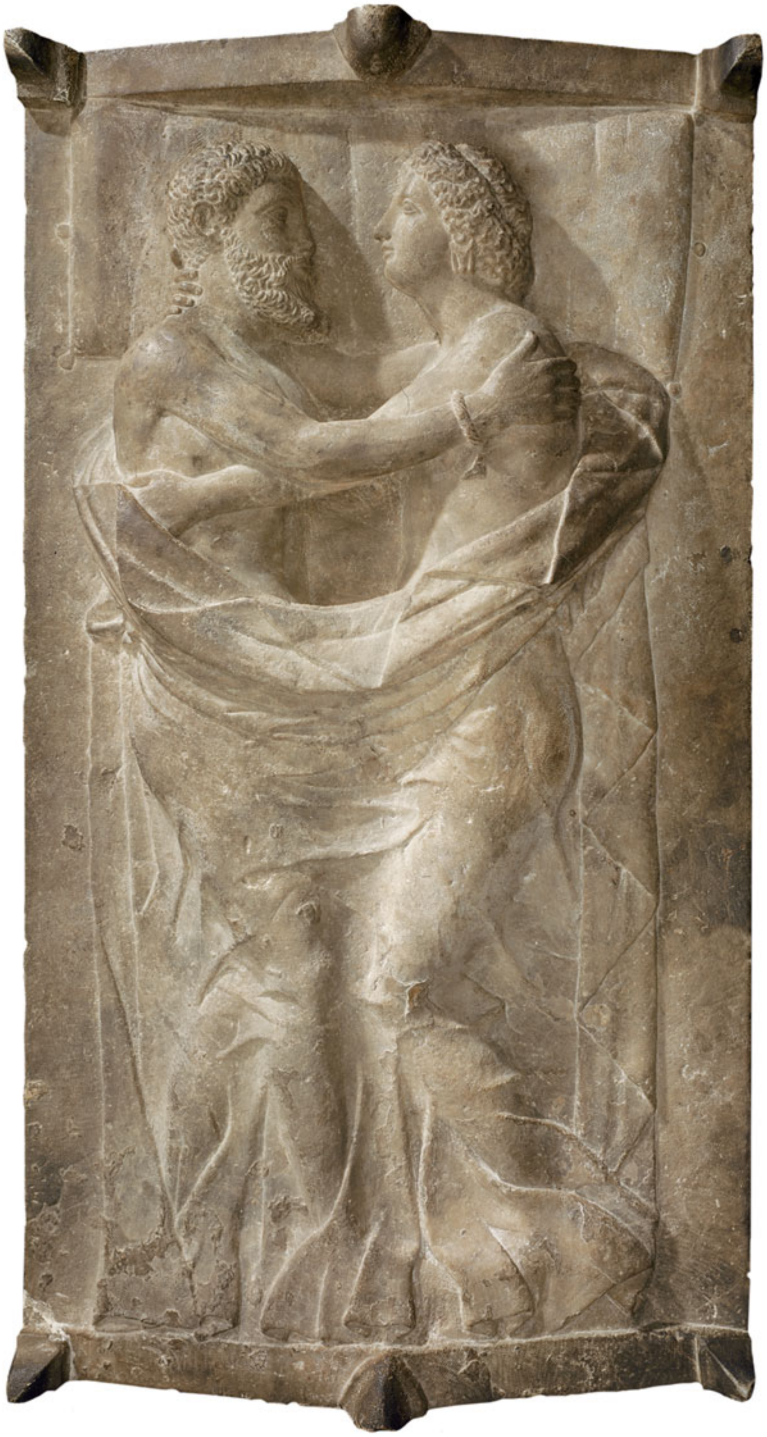
Portrait sarcophagi like this one evolved from earlier terra-cotta cinerary urns with sculpted heads of the deceased whose ashes they held.

his clothes and follow his naked companion, caught by the artist in mid-dive, plunging toward the water below. Such charming scenes of carefree diversions, removed from the routine demands of daily life, seem to promise a pleasurable post-mortem existence to the occupant of this tomb. But this diver could also symbolize the deceased's own plunge from life into death (see "The Tomb of the Diver," page 124).

In a painted frieze in the **TOMB OF THE TRICLINIUM**, somewhat later but also from Tarquinia, the diversions are more mature in focus as young men and women frolic to the music of the lyre and double flute within a room whose ceiling is enlivened with colorful geometric decoration (**FIG. 6-7**). These dancers line the side walls, composed within a carefully arranged setting of stylized trees and birds, while at the end of the room couples recline on couches enjoying a banquet as cats prowl underneath the table looking for scraps. The immediacy of this wall painting is striking. Dancers and diners—women as well as men—are engaging in the joyful customs and diversions of human life as we know it.

Some tombs were carved out of the rock to resemble rooms in a house. The **TOMB OF THE RELIEFS**, for example, seems to have a flat ceiling supported by square stone posts (**FIG. 6-8**). Its walls were plastered and painted, and it was fully furnished. Couches were carved from stone, and other fittings were formed of stucco, a slow-drying type of plaster that can be easily molded and carved. Simulated pots, jugs, robes, axes, and other items were molded and carved to look like real objects hanging on hooks. Could the animal rendered in low relief at the bottom of the post just left of center be the family pet?

The remains of the deceased were placed in urns or sarcophagi (coffins) made of clay or stone. On the terra-cotta **SARCOPHAGUS FROM CERVETERI**, dating from about 520 BCE (**FIG. 6-9**), a husband and wife are shown reclining comfortably on a dining



6–10 • MARRIED COUPLE (LARTH TETNIES AND THANCHVIL TARNAI) EMBRACING
Lid of a sarcophagus. c. 350–300 BCE. Marble, length 7′ (2.13 m). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Museum purchase with funds donated by contribution and the Benjamin Pierce Cheney Fund (86.145a-b)

couch. The smooth, lifelike forms of their upper bodies are vertical and square-shouldered, but their hips and extended legs seem to sink into the softness of the couch. Rather than a somber memorial to the dead, we encounter two lively individuals with alert eyes and warm smiles. The man once raised a drinking vessel, addressing the viewer with the lively and engaging gesture of a genial host, perhaps offering an invitation to dine with them for eternity or to join them in the sort of convivial festivities recorded in the paintings on the walls of Etruscan tombs.

The lid of another Etruscan sarcophagus—slightly later in date and carved of marble rather than molded in clay—also portrays a reclining Etruscan couple, but during a more private moment (**FIG. 6–10**). Dressed only in their jewelry and just partially sheathed by the light covering that clings to the forms of their bodies, this loving pair has been caught for eternity in a tender embrace, absorbed with each other rather than looking out to engage the viewer. The sculptor of this relief was clearly influenced by Greek Classicism in the rendering of human forms, but the human intimacy that is captured here is far removed from the cool, idealized detachment characterizing Greek funerary stelai (see FIG. 5–50).

WORKS IN BRONZE

The Etruscans developed special sophistication in casting and engraving on bronze. Some of the most extraordinary works were created for domestic use, including a group of surviving cistae—cylindrical containers used by wealthy women as cases for toiletry articles such as mirrors. The richly decorated Ficoroni Cista, dated to the second half of the fourth century BCE and found in Palestrina (see FIG. 6–1), was made by Novios Plautios for a woman named Dindia Macolnia, who gave it to her daughter.

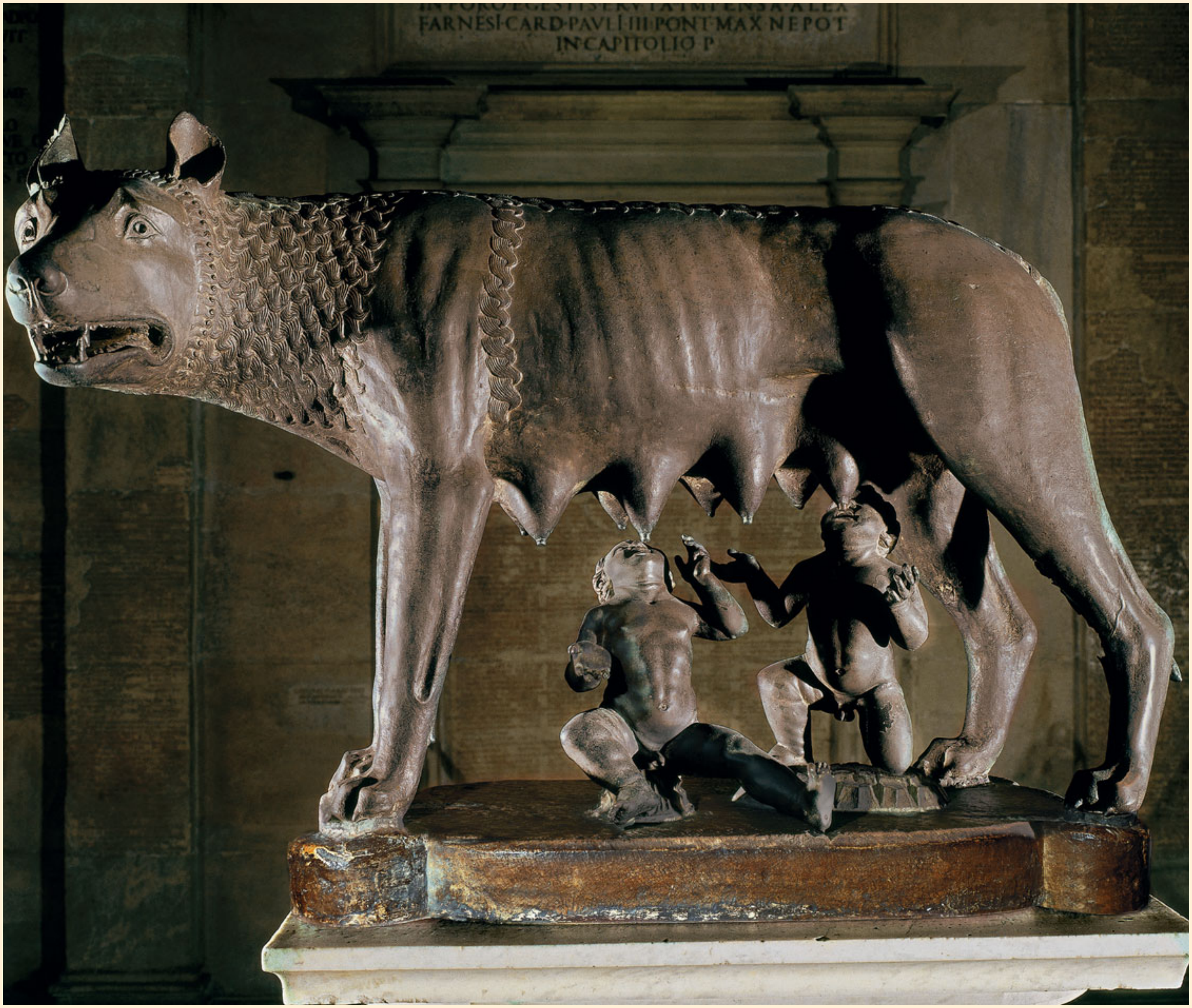
Since Etruscan bronze artists went to work for Roman patrons after Etruscan lands became part of the Roman Republic, distinguishing between Etruscan and early Roman art is often difficult. A head that was once part of a bronze statue of a man may be an example of an important Roman commission from an Etruscan artist (**FIG. 6–12**). Since it is over life size, this head may have been part of a commemorative work honoring a great man, and the downturned tilt of the head, as well as the flexing of the neck, have led many to propose that it was part of an equestrian figure. Traditionally dated to about 300 BCE, this rendering of a strong, broad face with heavy brows, hawk nose, firmly set lips, and clear-eyed expression is scrupulously detailed. The commanding, deep-set eyes are created with ivory inlay, within which float irises created of glass paste within a ring of bronze. The lifelike effect is further enhanced by added eyelashes of separately cut pieces of bronze. This work is often associated with a set of male virtues that would continue to be revered by the Romans: stern seriousness, strength of character, the age-worn appearance of a life well lived, and the wisdom and sense of purpose it confers.

Etruscan art and architectural forms left an indelible stamp on the art and architecture of early Rome that was rivaled only by the influence of Greece. By 88 BCE, when the Etruscans were granted Roman citizenship, their art had already been absorbed into that of Rome.

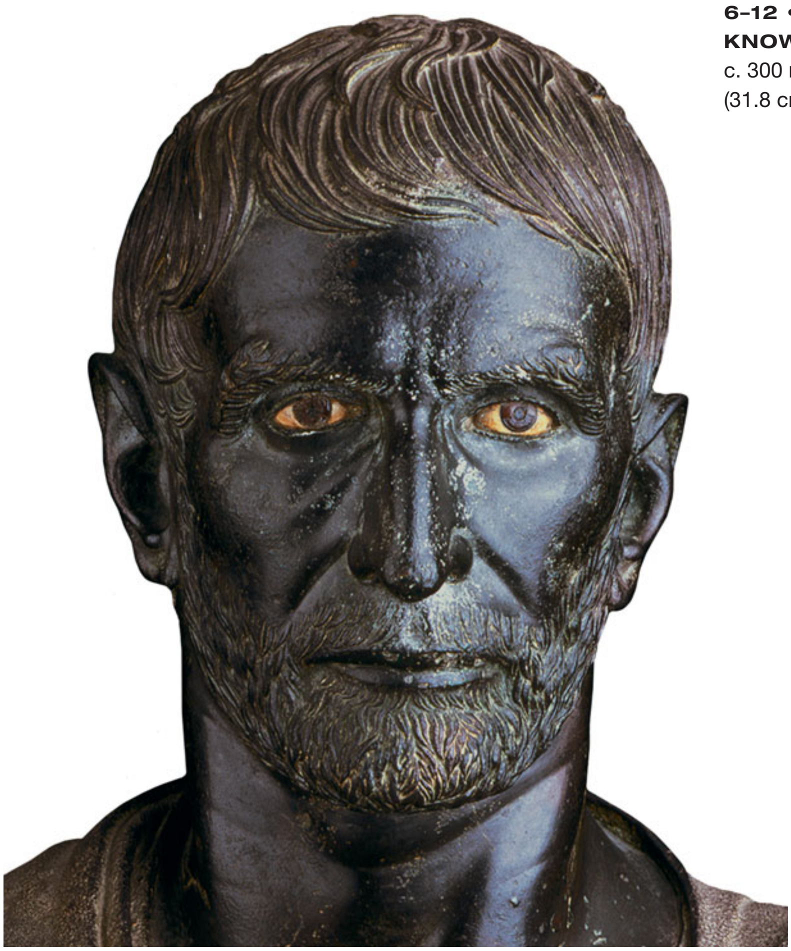
RECOVERING THE PAST | The Capitoline She-Wolf

This ferocious she-wolf has been considered an outstanding example of Etruscan bronze sculpture (**FIG. 6–11**), lauded for its technical sophistication and expressive intensity and traditionally dated to c. 500–470 BCE. She confronts us with a vicious snarl, her tense body, thin flanks, and protruding ribs, contrasting with her pendulous, milk-filled teats. Since she currently suckles two chubby human boys—Renaissance additions of the fifteenth century—the ensemble evokes the story of the twins Romulus and Remus, legendary founders of Rome, who were nursed back to health by a she-wolf after having been left to die on the banks of the Tiber. But is this famous animal actually Etruscan in origin?

Now in Rome's Museo Capitolino, the bronze she-wolf was restored and cleaned during 1997–2000, under the supervision of archaeologist Anna Maria Carruba, who has mounted a serious challenge to its Etruscan pedigree. She argues, in fact, that it dates not from antiquity, but from the Middle Ages. Technical as well as stylistic evidence supports her conclusions, specifically the fact that this unusual work, created by the lost-wax process, was formed in the medieval technique of single-pour casting, whereas all surviving Etruscan and Roman bronzes were assembled from separate pieces soldered together. Carruba's proposal of a date of c. 800 CE for the she-wolf has certainly caught the attention of specialists in ancient art, many of whom have revised their assessment of the work. Others are waiting for the full publication of the scientific evidence before removing the Capitoline She-Wolf from the Etruscan canon.



6–11 • CAPITOLINE SHE-WOLF
c. 500 BCE or c. 800 CE? (Boys underneath, 15th century CE). Bronze, height 33½″ (85 cm). Museo Capitolino, Rome.



6–12 • HEAD OF A MAN (TRADITIONALLY KNOWN AS "BRUTUS")
c. 300 BCE. Bronze, eyes of painted ivory, height 12½″ (31.8 cm). Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome.

THE ROMANS

At the same time that the Etruscan civilization was flourishing, the Latin-speaking inhabitants of Rome began to develop into a formidable power. For a time, kings of Etruscan lineage ruled them, but in 509 BCE the Romans overthrew them and formed a republic centered in Rome. The Etruscans themselves were absorbed by the Roman Republic at the end of the third century BCE, by which time Rome had steadily expanded its territory in many directions. The Romans unified what is now Italy and, after defeating their rival, the North African city-state of Carthage, they established an empire that encompassed the entire Mediterranean region (see MAP 6–1).

At its greatest extent, in the early second century CE, the Roman Empire reached from the Euphrates River, in southwest Asia, to Scotland. It ringed the Mediterranean Sea—*mare nostrum*, or "our sea," the Romans called it. Those who were conquered by the Romans gradually assimilated Roman legal, administrative, and cultural structures that endured for some five centuries—and in the eastern Mediterranean until the fifteenth century CE—and left a lasting mark on the civilizations that emerged in Europe.

The Romans themselves assimilated Greek gods, myths, and religious beliefs and practices into their state religion. During the imperial period, they also deified some of their emperors posthumously. Worship of ancient gods mingled with homage to past rulers; oaths of allegiance to the living ruler made the official religion a political duty. Religious worship became increasingly ritualized, perfunctory, and distant from the everyday life of most people.

Many Romans adopted the so-called mystery religions of the people they had conquered. Worship of Isis and Osiris from Egypt, Cybele (the Great Mother) from Anatolia, the hero-god Mithras from Persia, and the single, all-powerful God of Judaism and Christianity from Palestine challenged the Roman establishment. These unauthorized religions flourished alongside the state religion, with its Olympian deities and deified emperors, despite occasional government efforts to suppress them.

THE REPUBLIC, 509–27 BCE

Early Rome was governed by kings and an advisory body of leading citizens called the Senate. The population was divided into two classes: a wealthy and powerful upper class, the patricians, and a lower class, the plebeians. In 509 BCE, Romans overthrew the last Etruscan king and established the Roman Republic as an oligarchy, a government by aristocrats, that would last about 450 years.

ART AND ITS CONTEXTS | Roman Writers on Art

Only one book devoted specifically to the arts survives from antiquity. All our other written sources consist of digressions and insertions in works on other subjects. That one book, the *Ten Books on Architecture* by Vitruvius (c. 80–c. 15 BCE), however, is invaluable. Written for Augustus in the first century BCE, it is a practical handbook for builders that discusses such things as laying out cities, siting buildings, and using the Greek architectural orders. Vitruvius argued for appropriateness and rationality in architecture, and he also made significant contributions to art theory, including studies on proportion.

Pliny the Elder (c. 23–79 CE) wrote a vast encyclopedia of "facts, histories, and observations" known as *Naturalis Historia* (*The Natural History*) that often included discussions of art and architecture. Pliny occasionally used works of art to make his points—for example, citing sculpture within his essays on stone and metals. Pliny's scientific turn of mind led to his death, for he was overcome while observing the eruption of Mount Vesuvius that buried Pompeii. His nephew, Pliny the Younger (c. 61–113 CE), a voluminous letter writer, added to our knowledge of Roman domestic architecture with his meticulous descriptions of villas and gardens.

Valuable bits of information can also be found in books by travelers and historians. Pausanias, a second-century CE Greek traveler, wrote descriptions that are basic sources on Greek art and artists. Flavius Josephus (c. 37–100 CE), a historian of the Flavians, wrote in his *Jewish Wars* a description of the triumph of Titus that includes the treasures looted from the Temple in Jerusalem (see FIG. 6–37).

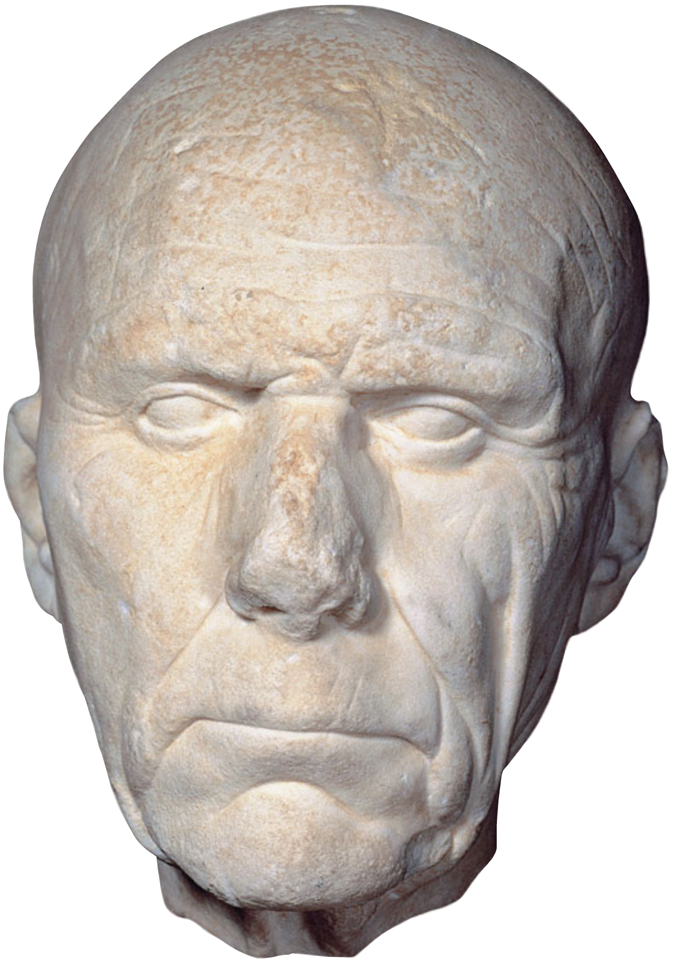
As a result of its stable form of government, and especially of its encouragement of military conquest, by 275 BCE Rome controlled the entire Italian peninsula. By 146 BCE, Rome had defeated its great rival, Carthage, on the north coast of Africa, and taken control of the western Mediterranean. By the mid second century BCE, Rome had taken Macedonia and Greece, and by 44 BCE, it had conquered most of Gaul (present-day France) as well as the eastern Mediterranean (see MAP 6–1). Egypt remained independent until Octavian defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE.

During the Republic, Roman art was rooted in its Etruscan heritage, but territorial expansion brought wider exposure to the arts of other cultures. Like the Etruscans, the Romans admired Greek art. As Horace wrote (*Epistulae* ii, 1): "Captive Greece conquered her savage conquerors and brought the arts to rustic Latium." The Romans used Greek designs and Greek orders in their architecture, imported Greek art, and employed Greek artists. In 146 BCE, for example, they stripped the Greek city of Corinth of its art treasures and shipped them back to Rome.

PORTRAIT SCULPTURE

Portrait sculptors of the Republican period sought to create lifelike images based on careful observation of their subjects, objectives that were related to the Romans' veneration of their ancestors and the making and public displaying of death masks of deceased relatives (see "Roman Portraiture," page 168).

Perhaps growing out of this early tradition of maintaining images of ancestors as death masks, a new Roman artistic ideal emerged during the Republican period in relation to portrait sculpture, an ideal quite different from the one we encountered in Greek Classicism. Instead of generalizing a human face, smoothed of its imperfections and caught in a moment of detached abstraction, this new Roman idealization emphasized—rather than suppressed—the hallmarks of advanced age and the distinguishing aspects of individual likenesses. This mode is most prominent in portraits of Roman patricians (**FIG. 6–13**), whose time-worn faces



6–13 • PORTRAIT HEAD OF AN ELDER FROM SCOPPITO
1st century BCE. Marble, height 11″ (28 cm). Museo Nazionale, Chieti.

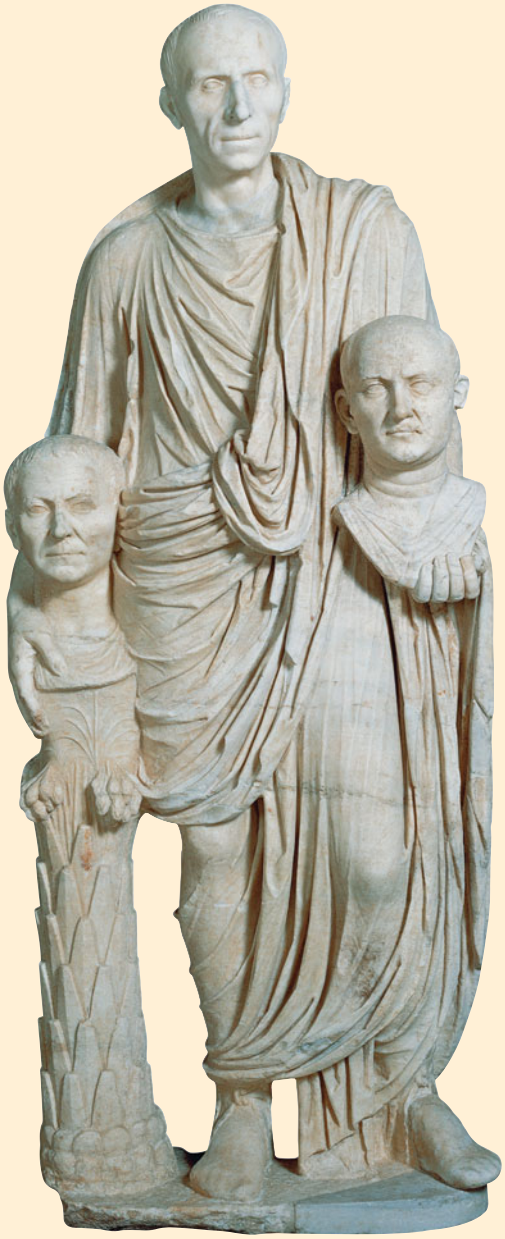
ART AND ITS CONTEXTS | Roman Portraiture

The strong emphasis on portraiture in Roman art may stem from the early practice of creating likenesses—in some cases actual wax death masks—of revered figures and distinguished ancestors for display on public occasions, most notably funerals. Contemporary historians have left colorful evocations of this distinctively Roman custom. Polybius, a Greek exiled to Rome in the middle of the second century BCE, wrote home with the following description:

> … after the interment [of the illustrious man] and the performance of the usual ceremonies, they place the image of the departed in the most conspicuous position in the house, enclosed in a wooden shrine. This image is a mask reproducing with remarkable fidelity both the features and the complexion of the deceased. On the occasion of public sacrifices, they display these images, and decorate them with much care, and when any distinguished member of the family dies they take them to the funeral, putting them on men who seem to bear the closest resemblance to the original in stature and carriage…. There could not easily be a more ennobling spectacle for a young man who aspires to fame and virtue. For who would not be inspired by the sight of the images of men renowned for their excellence, all together and as if alive and breathing?… By this means, by the constant renewal of the good report of brave men, the celebrity of those who performed noble deeds is rendered immortal, while at the same time the fame of those who did good services to their country becomes known to the people and a heritage for future generations. (*The Histories*, 7.53, 54, trans. W.R. Paton, Loeb Library ed.)

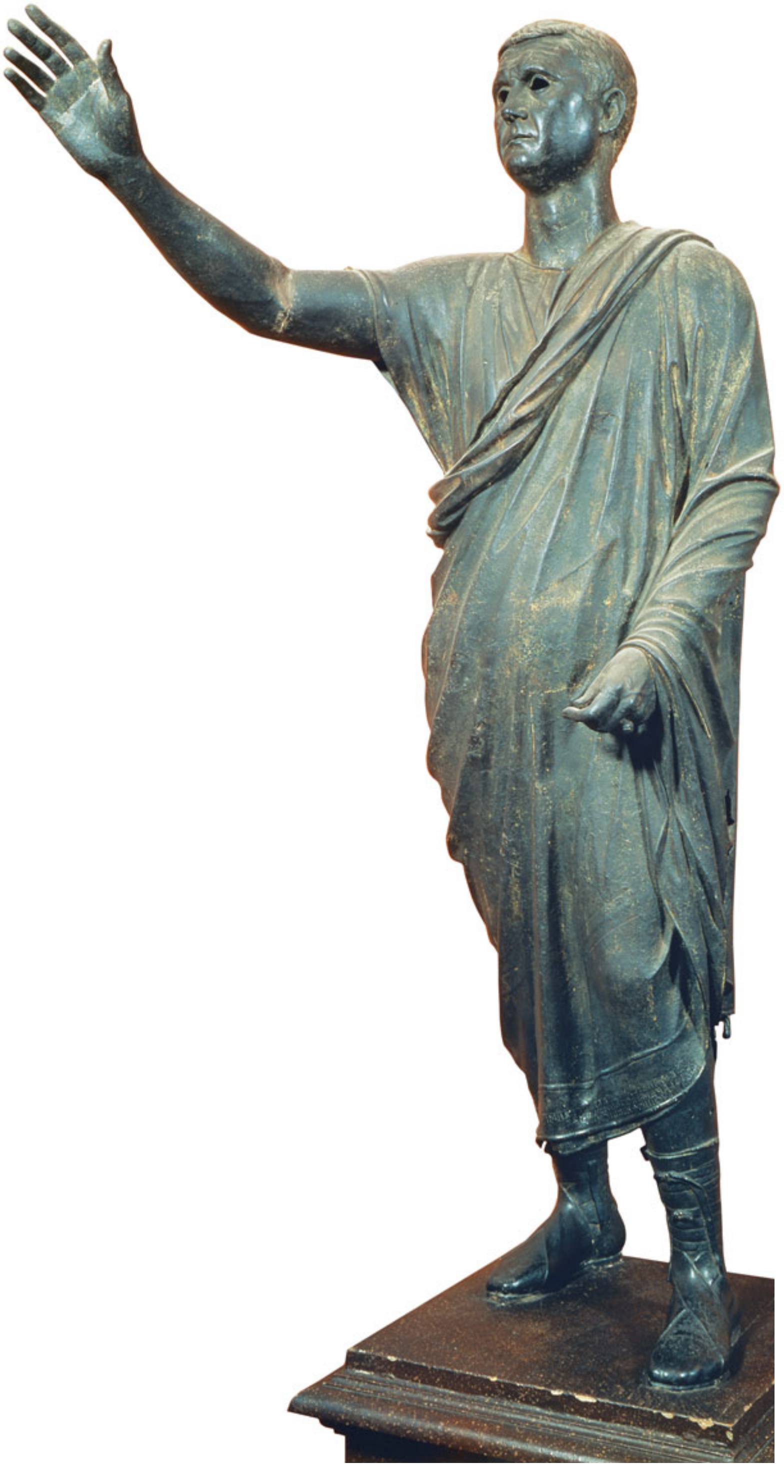
Growing out of this heritage, Roman Republican portraiture is frequently associated with the notion of **verism**—an interest in the faithful reproduction of the immediate visual and tactile appearance of subjects. Since we find in these portrait busts the same sorts of individualizing physiognomic features that allow us to differentiate among the people we know in our own world, it is easy to assume that they are exact likenesses of their subjects as they appeared during their lifetime. Of course, this is impossible to verify, but our strong desire to believe it must realize the intentions of the artists who made these portraits and the patrons for whom they were made.

A life-size marble statue of a Roman **PATRICIAN** (**FIG. 6–14**), dating from the period of the Emperor Augustus, reflects the practices documented much earlier by Polybius and links the man portrayed with a revered tradition and its laudatory associations. The large marble format emulates a Greek notion of sculpture, and its use here signals not only this man's wealth but also his sophisticated artistic tastes, characteristics he shared with the emperor himself. His toga, however, is not Greek but indigenous and signifies his respectability as a Roman citizen of some standing. The busts of ancestors that he holds in his hands document his distinguished lineage in the privileged upper class (laws regulated which members of society could own such collections) and the statue as a whole proclaims his adherence to the family tradition by having his own portrait created.



6–14 • PATRICIAN CARRYING PORTRAIT BUSTS OF TWO ANCESTORS (KNOWN AS THE BARBERINI TOGATUS)
End of 1st century BCE or beginning of 1st century CE. Marble, height 5′5″ (1.65 m). Palazzo de Conservatori, Rome.

The head of this standing figure, though ancient Roman in origin, is a later replacement and not original to this statue. The separation of head and body in this work is understandable since in many instances the bodies of full-length portraits were produced in advance, waiting in the sculptor's workshop for a patron to commission a head with his or her own likeness that could be attached to it. Presumably the busts carried by this patrician were likewise only blocked out until they could be carved with the faces of the commissioner's ancestors. These faces share a striking family resemblance, and the stylistic difference reproduced in the two distinct bust formats reveals that these men lived in successive generations. They could be the father and grandfather of the man who carries them.

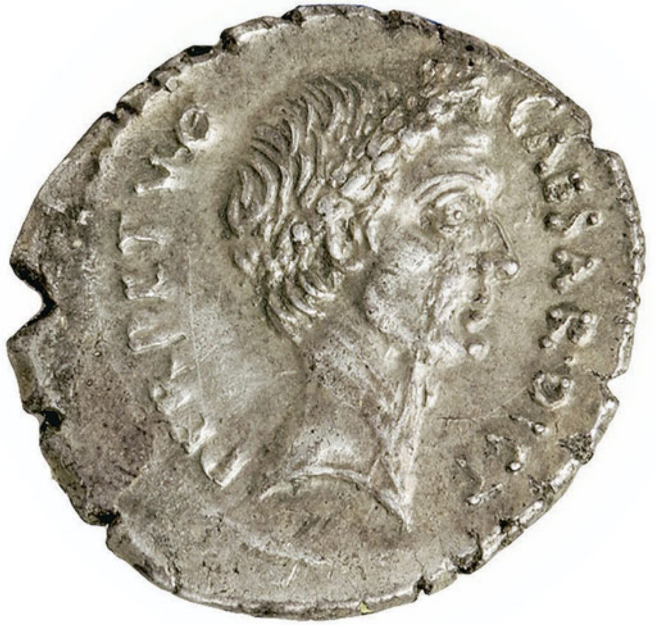


6–15 • AULUS METELLUS (THE ORATOR)
Found near Perugia. c. 80 BCE. Bronze, height 5′11″ (1.8 m).
Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence.

embody the wisdom and experience that come with old age. Frequently we take these portraits of wrinkled elders at face value, as highly realistic and faithful descriptions of actual human beings—contrasting Roman realism with Greek idealism—but there is good reason to think that these portraits actually conform to a particularly Roman type of idealization that underscores the effects of aging on the human face.

THE ORATOR The life-size bronze portrait of **AULUS METELLUS**—the Roman official's name is inscribed on the hem of his garment in Etruscan letters (**FIG. 6–15**)—dates to about 80 BCE. The statue, known from early times as *The Orator*, depicts a man addressing a gathering, his arm outstretched and slightly raised, a pose expressive of rhetorical persuasiveness. The orator wears sturdy laced leather boots and a folded and draped toga, the characteristic garment of a Roman senator. Perhaps the statue was mounted on an inscribed base in a public space by officials grateful for Aulus' benefactions on behalf of their city.

THE DENARIUS OF JULIUS CAESAR The propaganda value of portraits was not lost on Roman leaders. In 44 BCE, Julius Caesar issued a **DENARIUS** (a widely circulated coin) bearing his portrait (**FIG. 6–16**) conforming to the Roman ideal of advanced age. He was the first Roman leader to place his own image on a coin, initiating a practice that would be adopted by his successors, but at the time when this coin was minted, it smacked of the sort of megalomaniacal behavior that would ultimately lead to his assassination. Perhaps it is for this reason that Caesar underscores his age, and thus his old-fashioned respectability, in this portrait, which reads as a mark of his traditionalism as a senator. But the inscription placed around his head—CAESAR DICT PERPETUO, or "Caesar, dictator forever"—certainly contradicts the ideal embodied in the portrait.



6–16 • DENARIUS WITH PORTRAIT OF JULIUS CAESAR
44 BCE. Silver, diameter approximately ¾″ (1.9 cm).
American Numismatic Society, New York.

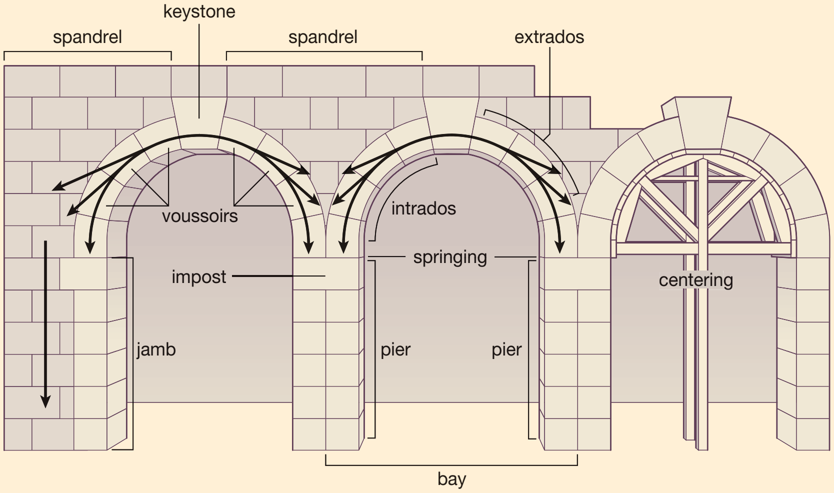
ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE | The Roman Arch

The round arch was not an Etruscan or Roman invention, but the Etruscans and Romans were the first to make widespread use of it (see FIG. 6–2)—both as an effective structural idea and an elegant design motif.

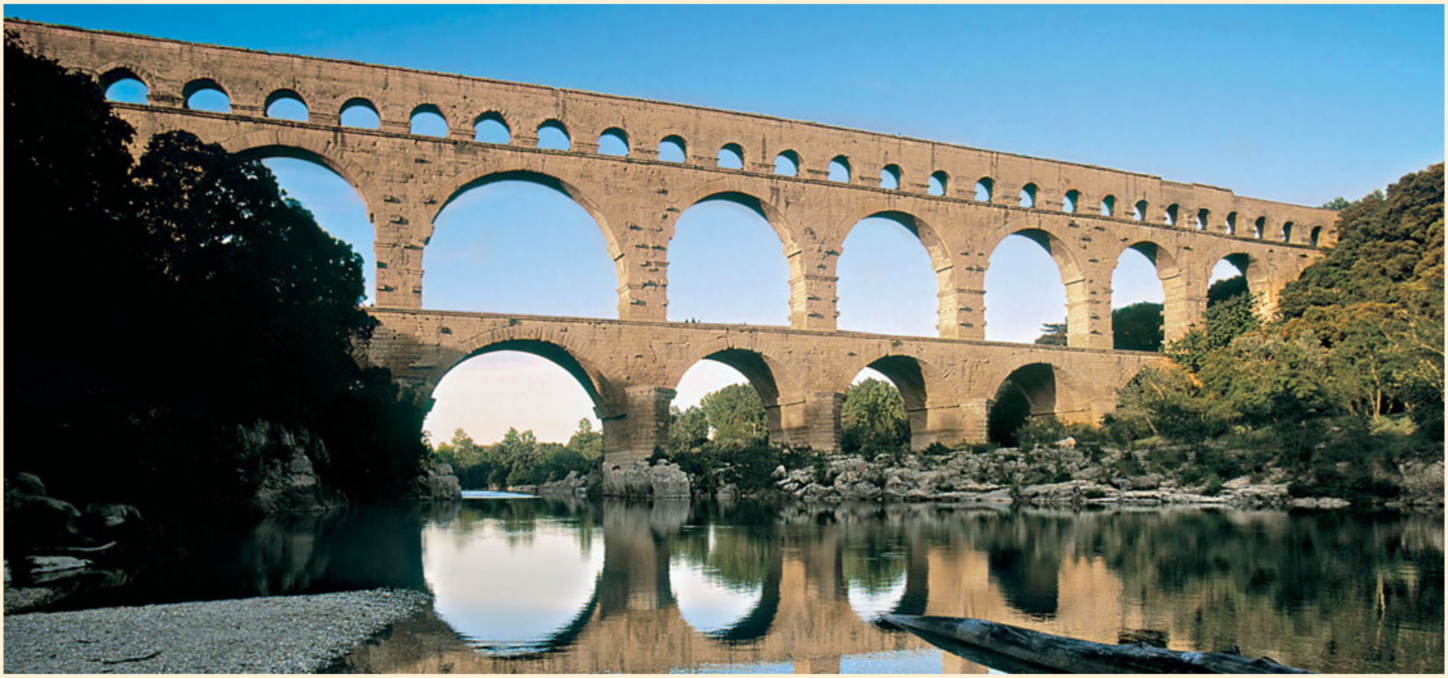
Round arches displace most of their weight, or downward **thrust** (see arrows on diagram), along their curving sides, transmitting that weight to adjacent supporting uprights (door or window jambs, columns, or piers). From there, the thrust goes to, and is supported by, the ground. To create an arch, brick or cut stones are formed into a curve by fitting together wedge-shaped pieces, called **voussoirs**, until they meet and are locked together at the top center by the final piece, called the **keystone**. These voussoirs exert an outward as well as a downward thrust, so arches may require added support, called **buttressing**, from adjacent masonry elements.

Until the keystone is in place and the mortar between the bricks or stones dries, an arch is held in place by wooden scaffolding called **centering**. The points from which the curves of the arch rise are called **springings**, and their support is often reinforced by **impost blocks**. The wall areas adjacent to the curves of the arch are **spandrels**. In a succession of arches, called an **arcade**, the space encompassed by each arch and its supports is called a **bay**.

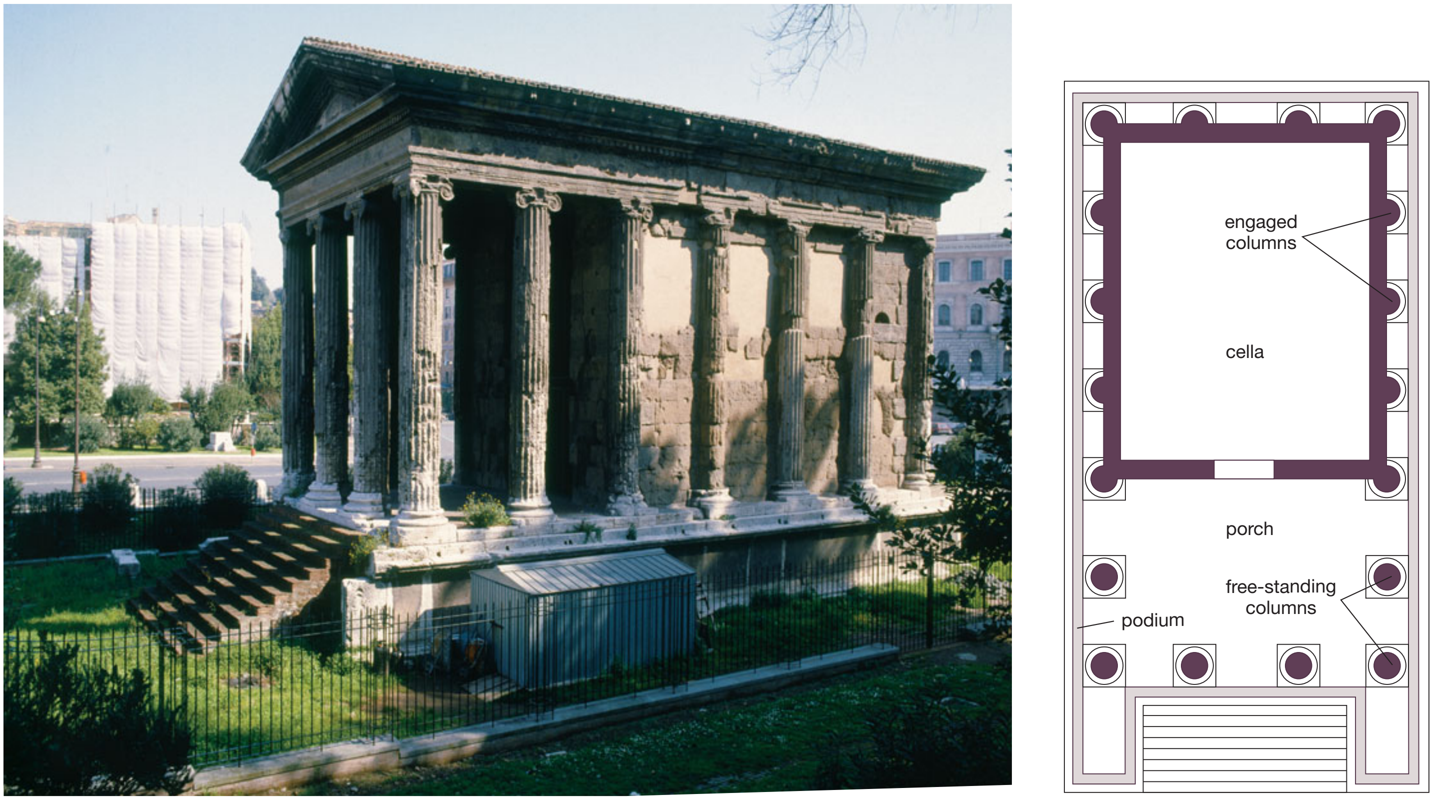
A stunning example of the early Roman use of the round arch is a bridge known as the **PONT DU GARD** (**FIG. 6–17**), part of an aqueduct located near Nîmes, in southern France. An ample water supply was essential for a city, and the Roman invention to supply this water was the aqueduct, built with arcades—a linear series of arches. This aqueduct brought water from springs 30 miles to the north using a simple gravity flow, and it provided 100 gallons a day for every person in Nîmes. Each arch buttresses its neighbors and the huge arcade ends solidly in the hillsides. The structure conveys the balance, proportions, and rhythmic harmony of a great work of art, and although it harmonizes with its natural setting, it also makes a powerful statement about Rome's ability to control nature in order to provide for its cities. Both structure and function are marks of Roman civilization.



6–17 • PONT DU GARD
Nîmes, France. Late 1st century BCE. Height above river 160′ (49 m), width of road bed on lower arcade 20′ (6 m).



Watch an architectural simulation about the arch on myartslab.com



6–18 • EXTERIOR VIEW (A) AND PLAN (B) OF A TEMPLE, PERHAPS DEDICATED TO PORTUNUS
Forum Boarium (Cattle Market), Rome. Late 2nd century BCE.

ROMAN TEMPLES

Architecture during the Roman Republic reflected both Etruscan and Greek practices. Like the Etruscans, the Romans built urban temples in commercial centers as well as in special sanctuaries. An early example is a small rectangular temple standing on a raised platform, or podium, beside the Tiber River in Rome (**FIG. 6–18**), probably from the second century BCE and perhaps dedicated to Portunus, the god of harbors and ports. This temple uses the Etruscan system of a rectangular cella and a front porch at one end reached by a broad, inviting flight of steps, but the Roman architects have adopted the Greek Ionic order, with full columns on the porch and half-columns **engaged** (set into the wall) around the exterior walls of the cella (see FIG. 6–18B) and a continuous frieze in the entablature. The overall effect resembles a Greek temple, but there are two major differences. First, Roman architects liberated the form of the column from its post-and-lintel structural roots and engaged it onto the surface of the wall as a decorative feature. Second, while a Greek temple encourages viewers to walk around the building and explore its uniformly articulated sculptural mass, Roman temples are defined in relation to interior spaces, which visitors are invited to enter through one opening along the longitudinal axis of a symmetrical plan.

By the first century BCE, nearly a million people lived in Rome, which had evolved into the capital of a formidable commercial and political power with a growing overseas empire. As long as Republican Rome was essentially a large city-state, its form of government—an oligarchy under the control of a Senate—remained feasible. But as the empire around it grew larger and larger, a government of competing senators and military commanders could not enforce taxation and maintain order in what was becoming a vast and complicated territorial expanse. As governance of the Republic began to fail, power became concentrated in fewer and fewer leaders, until it was ruled by one man, an emperor, rather than by the Senate.

THE EARLY EMPIRE, 27 BCE–96 CE

The first Roman emperor was born Octavian in 63 BCE. When he was only 18 years old, his brilliant great-uncle, Julius Caesar, adopted him as son and heir, recognizing in him qualities that would make him a worthy successor. Shortly after Julius Caesar refused the Senate's offer of the imperial crown, early in 44 BCE, he was murdered by a group of conspirators, and the 19-year-old Octavian stepped up. Over the next 17 spectacular years, as general, politician, statesman, and public-relations genius, Octavian vanquished warring internal factions and brought peace to fractious provinces. By 27 BCE, the Senate had conferred on him the title of Augustus (meaning "exalted," "sacred"). Assisted by his astute and pragmatic second wife, Livia, Augustus led the state and the empire for 45 years. He established efficient rule and laid the foundation for an extended period of stability, domestic peace, and economic prosperity known as the *Pax Romana* ("Roman Peace"), which lasted over 200 years (27 BCE to 180 CE). In 12 BCE he was given the title Pontifex Maximus ("High Priest"), becoming the empire's highest religious official as well as its political leader.

Conquering and maintaining a vast empire required not only the inspired leadership and tactics of Augustus, but also careful planning, massive logistical support, and great administrative skill. Some of Rome's most enduring contributions to Western civilization reflect these qualities—its system of law, its governmental and administrative structures, and its sophisticated civil engineering and architecture.

To facilitate the development and administration of the empire, as well as to make city life comfortable and attractive to its citizens, the Roman state undertook building programs of unprecedented scale and complexity, mandating the construction of central administrative and legal centers (forums and basilicas), recreational facilities (racetracks, stadiums), temples, markets, theaters, public baths, aqueducts, middle-class housing, and even entire new towns. To accomplish these tasks without sacrificing beauty, efficiency, and human well-being, Roman builders and architects developed rational plans using easily worked but durable materials and highly sophisticated engineering methods.

To move their armies about efficiently, to speed communications between Rome and the farthest reaches of the empire, and to promote commerce, the Romans built a vast and complex network of roads and bridges. Many modern European highways still follow the lines laid down by Roman engineers, some Roman bridges are still in use, and Roman-era foundations underlie the streets of many cities.

ART IN THE AGE OF AUGUSTUS

Roman artists of the Augustan age created a new style—a new Roman form of idealism that, though still grounded in the appearance of the everyday world, is heavily influenced by a revival of Greek Classical ideals. They enriched the art of portraiture in both official images and representations of private individuals, they recorded contemporary historical events on public monuments, and they contributed unabashedly to Roman imperial propaganda.

AUGUSTUS OF PRIMAPORTA In the sculpture known as **AUGUSTUS OF PRIMAPORTA** (**FIG. 6–19**)—because it was discovered in Livia's villa at Primaporta, near Rome (see FIG. 6–32)—we see the emperor as he wanted to be seen and remembered. This work demonstrates the creative combination of earlier sculptural traditions that is a hallmark of Augustan art. In its idealization of a specific ruler and his prowess, the sculpture also illustrates the way Roman emperors would continue to use portraiture for propaganda that not only expressed their authority directly, but rooted it in powerfully traditional stories and styles.

The sculptor of this larger-than-life marble statue adapted the standard pose of a Roman orator (see FIG. 6–15) by melding it with the contrapposto and canonical proportions developed by the Greek High Classical sculptor Polykleitos, as exemplified by his *Spear Bearer* (see "'The Canon' of Polykleitos," page 134). Like the heroic Greek figure, Augustus' portrait captures him in the physical prime of youth, far removed from the image of advanced age idealized in the coin portrait of Julius Caesar. Although Augustus lived almost to age 76, in his portraits he is always a vigorous ruler, eternally young. But like Caesar, and unlike the *Spear Bearer*, Augustus' face is rendered with the kind of details that make this portrait an easily recognizable likeness.

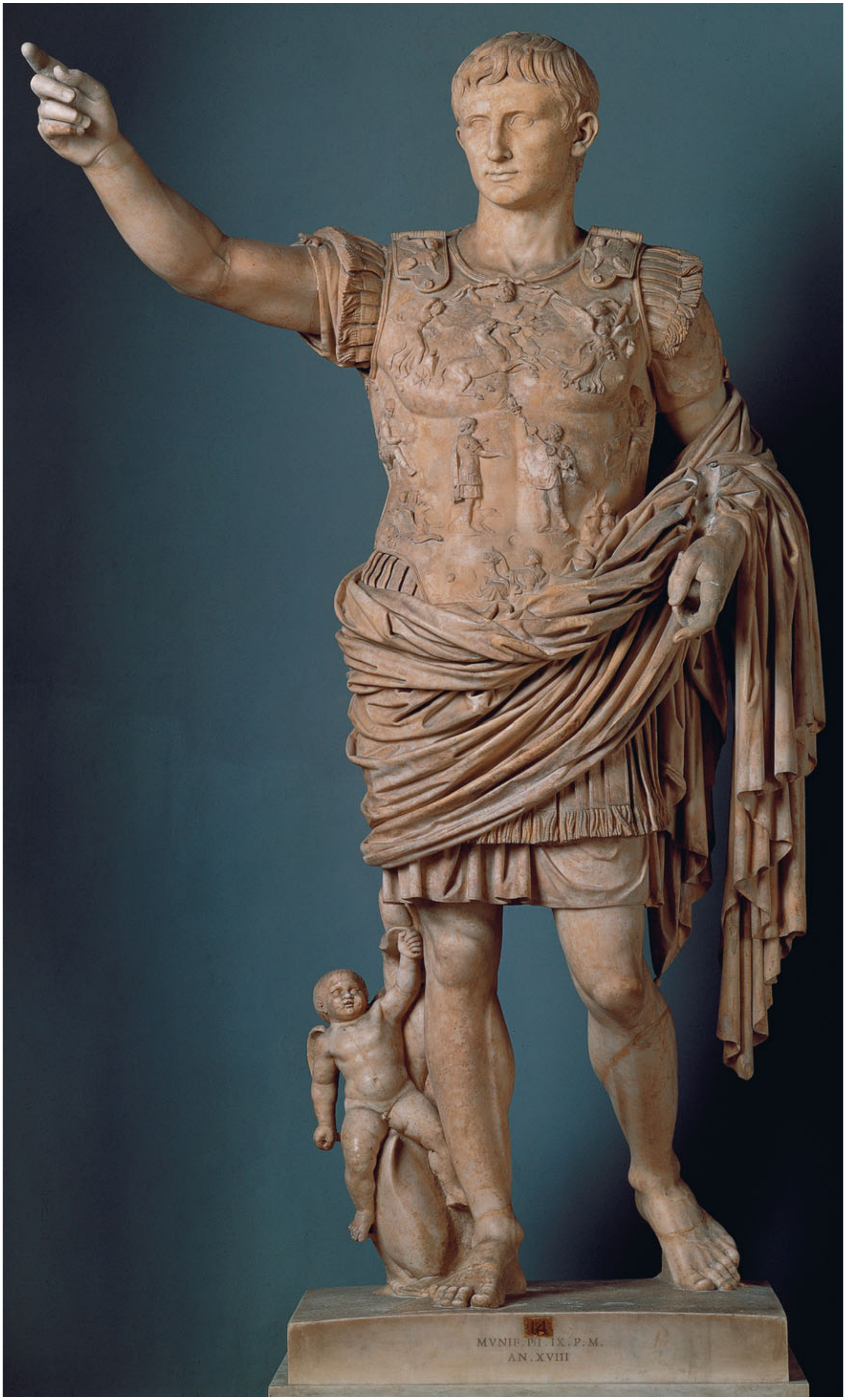
To this combination of Greek and Roman traditions, the sculptor of the *Augustus of Primaporta* added mythological and historical imagery that exalts Augustus' family and celebrates his accomplishments. Cupid, son of the goddess Venus, rides a dolphin next to the emperor's right leg, a reference to the claim of the emperor's family, the Julians, to descent from the goddess Venus through her human son Aeneas. Augustus' anatomically conceived cuirass (torso armor) is also covered with figural imagery. Mid-torso is a scene representing Augustus' 20 BCE diplomatic victory over the Parthians; a Parthian (on the right) returns a Roman military standard to a figure variously identified as a Roman soldier or the goddess Roma. Looming above this scene at the top of the cuirass is a celestial deity who holds an arched canopy, implying that the peace signified by the scene below has cosmic implications. The personification of the earth at the bottom of the cuirass holds an overflowing cornucopia, representing the prosperity brought by Augustan peace.

Another Augustan monument that synthesizes Roman traditions and Greek Classical influence to express the peace and prosperity that Augustus brought to Rome is the Ara Pacis Augustae (see "The Ara Pacis Augustae," page 174). The processional friezes on the exterior sides of the enclosure wall clearly reflect Classical Greek works like the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon (see FIG. 5–40), with their three-dimensional figures wrapped in revealing draperies that also create rhythmic patterns of rippling folds. But unlike the Greek sculptors of the Parthenon, the Roman sculptors of the Ara Pacis depicted actual individuals participating in a specific event at a known time. The Classical style may evoke the general notion of a Golden Age, but the historical references and identifiable figures in the Ara Pacis procession associate that Golden Age specifically with Augustus and his dynasty.

THE JULIO-CLAUDIANS

After his death in 14 CE, Augustus was deified by decree of the Roman Senate and succeeded by his stepson Tiberius (r. 14–37 CE). In acknowledgment of the lineage of both—Augustus from Julius Caesar and Tiberius from his father, Tiberius Claudius Nero, Livia's first husband—the dynasty is known as the Julio-Claudian (14–68 CE). It ended with the death of Nero in 68 CE.

An exquisite large onyx **cameo** (a gemstone carved in low relief) known as the **GEMMA AUGUSTEA** glorifies Augustus as triumphant over barbarians (a label for foreigners that the Romans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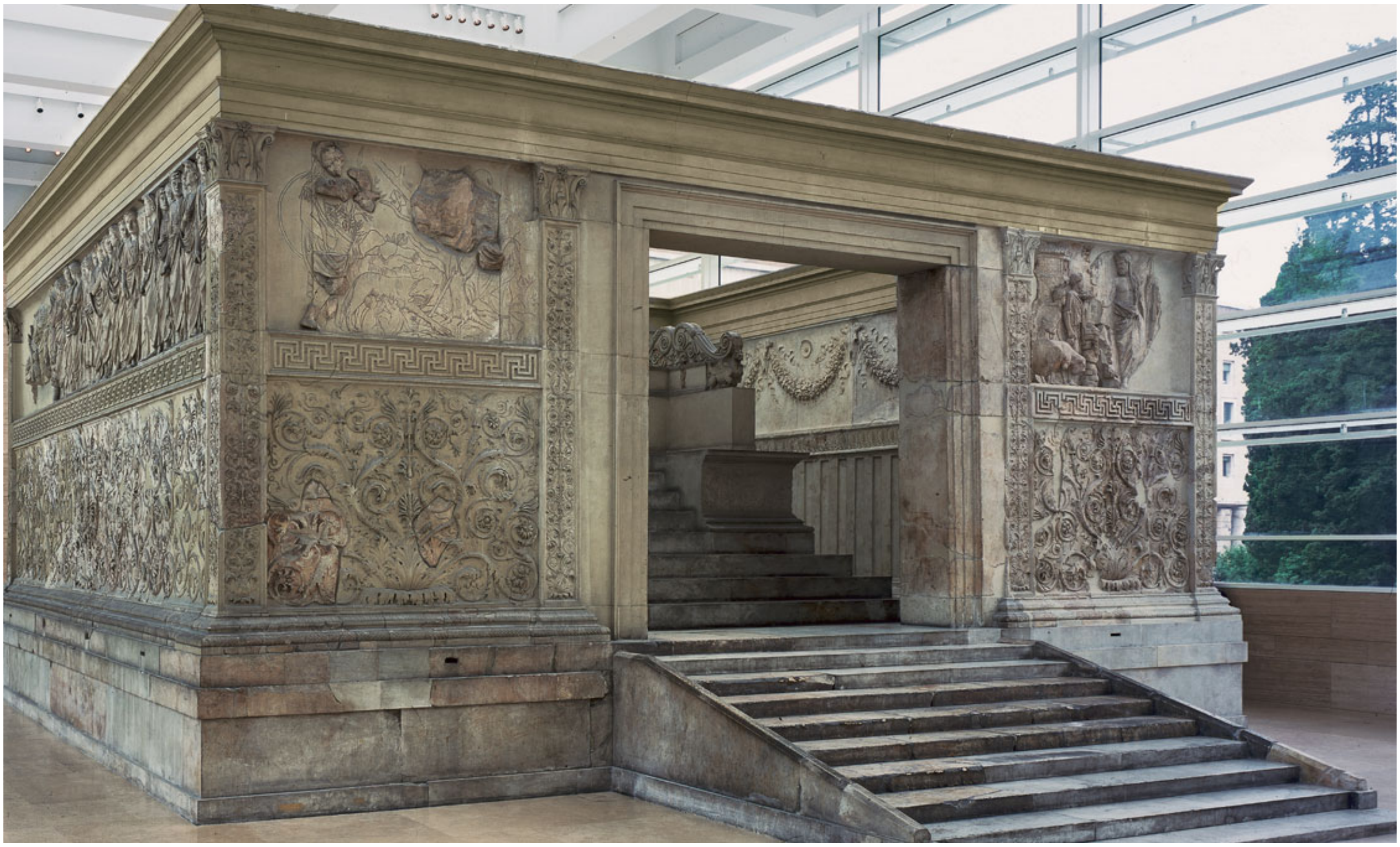
6–19 • AUGUSTUS OF PRIMAPORTA
Early 1st century CE. Perhaps a copy of a bronze statue of c. 20 BCE. Marble, originally colored, height 6′8″ (2.03 m). Musei Vaticani, Braccio Nuovo, Rome.

A BROADER LOOK | The Ara Pacis Augustae



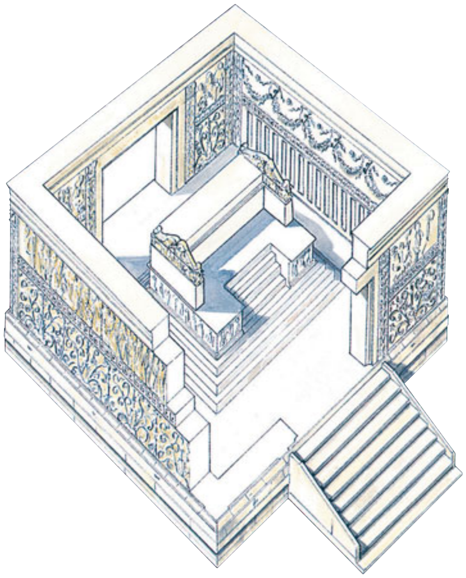
6-20 • ARA PACIS AUGUSTAE (ALTAR OF AUGUSTAN PEACE)
Rome. 13–9 BCE. View of west side. Marble, approx. 34′5″ × 38′ (10.5 × 11.6 m).

This monument was begun when Augustus was 50 (in 13 BCE) and was dedicated on Livia's 50th birthday (9 BCE).

One of the most extraordinary surviving Roman monuments from the time of Augustus is the **ARA PACIS AUGUSTAE**, or Altar of Augustan Peace (**FIG. 6-20**), begun in 13 BCE and dedicated in 9 BCE, on the occasion of Augustus' triumphal return to the capital after three years spent establishing Roman rule in Gaul and Hispania. In its original location in the Campus Martius (Plain of Mars), the Ara Pacis was aligned with a giant sundial, marked out on the pavement with lines and bronze inscriptions, using as its pointer an Egyptian obelisk that Augustus had earlier brought from Heliopolis to signify Roman dominion over this ancient land.

The Ara Pacis itself consists of a walled rectangular enclosure surrounding an open-air altar, emulating Greek custom (**FIG. 6-21**). Made entirely of marble panels carved with elaborate sculpture, the monument presented powerful propaganda, uniting portraiture and allegory, religion and politics, the private and the public. On the inner walls, foliate garlands are suspended in swags from ox skulls. The skulls symbolize sacrificial offerings at the altar during annual commemorations, and the garlands—including fruits and flowers from every season—signify the continuing peace and prosperity that Augustus brought to the Roman world.

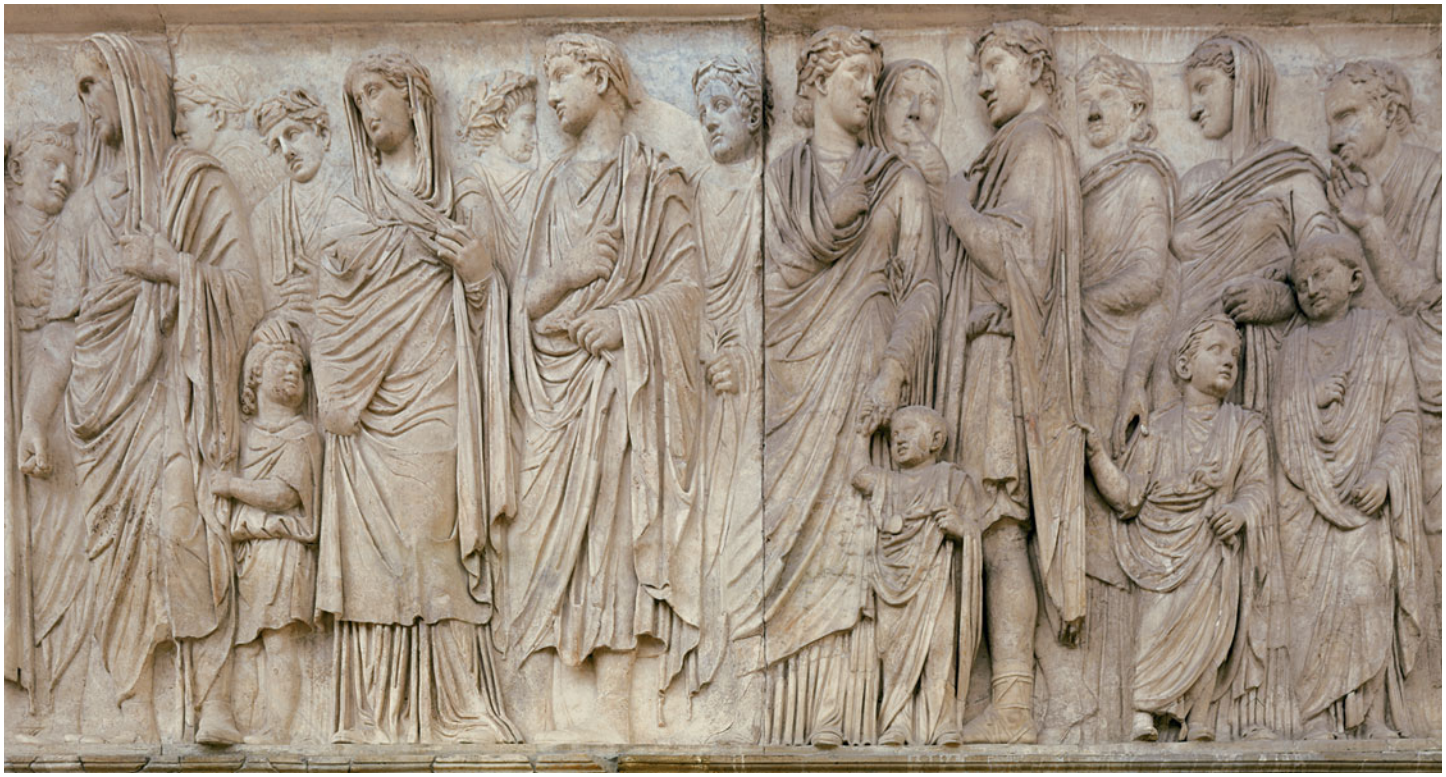
On the exterior, this theme of natural prosperity continues in lower reliefs of lavish, scrolling acanthus populated by animals. Above them, decorative allegory gives way to figural tableaux. On the front and back are framed allegorical scenes evoking the mythical history of Rome and the divine ancestry of Augustus. The longer sides portray two continuous processions, seemingly representing actual historical events rather than myth or allegory. Perhaps they document Augustus' triumphal return, or they could memorialize the dedication and first sacrifice performed by Augustus on the completed altar itself. In any event, the arrangement of the participants is emblematic of the fundamental dualism characterizing Roman rule under Augustus. On one side march members of the Senate, a stately line of male elders. But on the other is Augustus' imperial family (**FIG. 6-22**)—men, women, and notably, children, who stand in the foreground as Augustus' hopes for dynastic succession. Whereas most of the adults maintain their focus on the ceremonial event, the imperial children are allowed to fidget, look at their cousins, or reach up to find comfort in holding the hands or tugging at the garments of the adults around them, one of whom puts her finger to her mouth in a shushing gesture, perhaps seeking to mitigate their distracting behavior. The lifelike aura brought by such anecdotal details underlines the earthborn reality of the ideology embodied here. Rome is now subject to the imperial rule of the family of Augustus, and this stable system will bring continuing peace and prosperity since his successors have already been born.



The Ara Pacis did not survive from antiquity in the form we see today. The monument eventually fell into disuse, ultimately into ruin. Remains were first discovered in 1568, but complete excavation took place only in 1937–1938, under the supervision of archaeologist Giuseppe Moretti, sponsored by dictator Benito Mussolini, who was fueled by his own ideological objectives. Once the monument had been unearthed, Mussolini had it reconstructed and commissioned a special building to house it, close to the **Mausoleum** (monumental tomb) of Augustus, all in preparation for celebrating the 2,000th anniversary of Augustus' birth and associating the Roman imperial past with Mussolini's fascist state. The dictator even planned his own burial within Augustus' mausoleum.

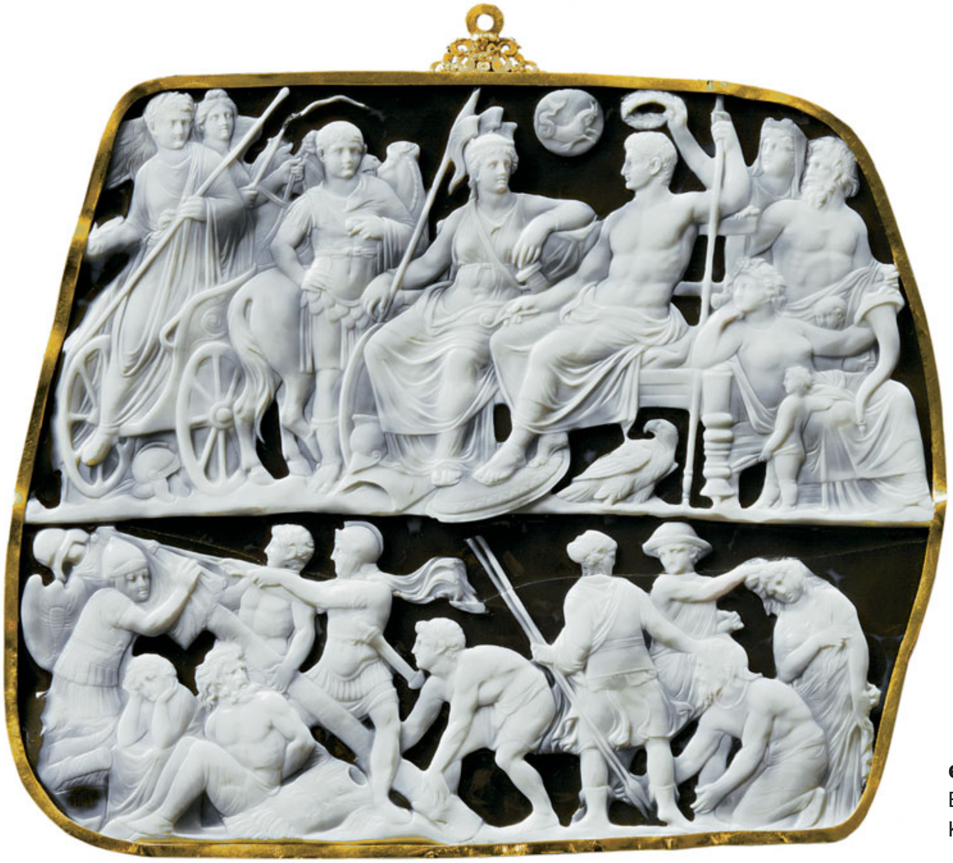
More recently, the City of Rome commissioned American architect Richard Meier to design a new setting for the Ara Pacis, this time within a sleek, white box with huge walls of glass that allow natural light to flood the exhibition space (seen in FIG. 6–20). Many Italian critics decried the Modernist design of Meier's building—completed in 2006—but this recent urban renewal project focused on the Ara Pacis has certainly revived interest in one of the most precious remains of Augustan Rome.

6–21 • RECONSTRUCTION DRAWING OF THE ARA PACIS AUGUSTAE



6–22 • IMPERIAL PROCESSION
Detail of a relief on the south side of the Ara Pacis. Height 5′2″ (1.6 m).

The figures in this frieze represent members of Augustus' extended family, and scholars have proposed some specific, if tentative, identifications. The middle-aged man with the shrouded head at the far left is generally accepted to be a posthumous portrait of Marcus Agrippa, who would have been Augustus' successor had he not predeceased him in 12 BCE. The bored but well-behaved youngster pulling at Agrippa's robe—and being restrained gently by the hand of the man behind him—is probably Agrippa's son Gaius Caesar. The heavily swathed woman next to Agrippa on the right may be Augustus' wife, Livia, followed perhaps by Tiberius, who would become the next emperor. Behind Tiberius could be Antonia, the niece of Augustus, looking back at her husband, Drusus, Livia's younger son. She may grasp the hand of Germanicus, one of her younger children. The depiction of children and real women in an official relief was new to the Augustan period and reflects Augustus' desire to promote private family life as well as to emphasize his potential heirs and thus the continuity of his dynasty.



6–23 • GEMMA AUGUSTEA
Early 1st century CE. Onyx, 7½″ × 9″ (19 × 23 cm). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

adopted from the Greeks) and as the deified emperor (**FIG. 6–23**). The emperor, crowned with a victor's wreath, sits at the center right of the upper register. He has assumed the pose and identity of Jupiter, the king of the gods; an eagle, sacred to Jupiter, stands at his feet. Sitting next to him is a personification of Rome that seems to have Livia's features. The sea goat in the roundel between them may represent Capricorn, the emperor's zodiac sign.

Tiberius, as the adopted son of Augustus, steps out of a chariot at far left, returning victorious from the German front, prepared to assume the imperial throne as Augustus' chosen heir. Below this realm of godlike rulers, Roman soldiers are raising a post or standard on which armor captured from the defeated enemy is displayed as a trophy. The cowering, shackled barbarians on the bottom right wait to be tied to it. The artist of the Gemma Augustea brilliantly combines idealized, heroic figures based on Classical Greek art with recognizable Roman portraits, the dramatic action of Hellenistic art with Roman attention to descriptive detail and historical specificity.

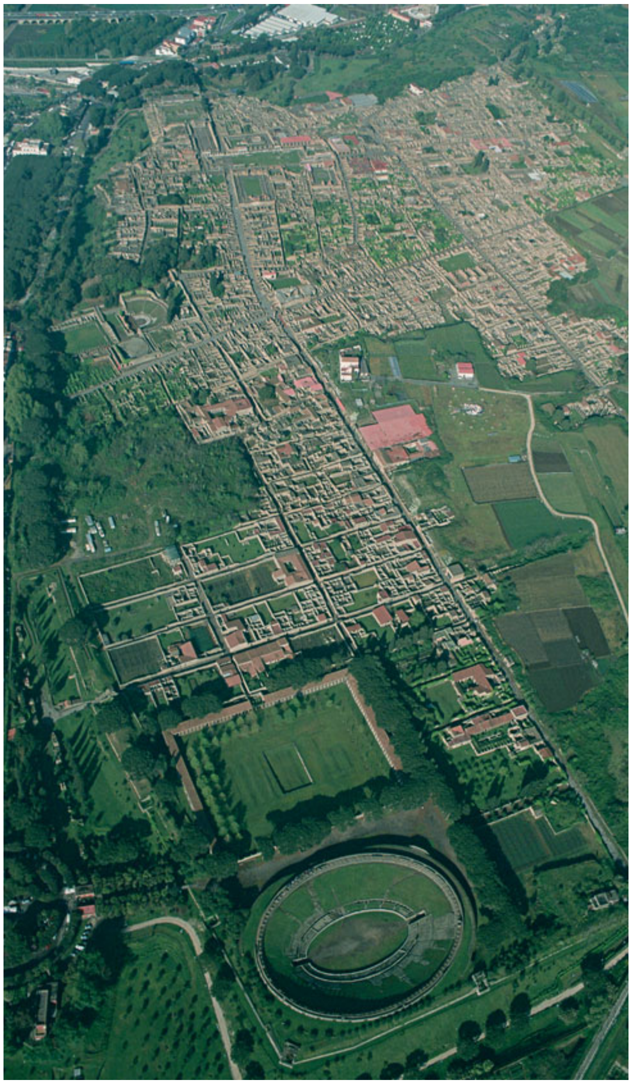
ROMAN CITIES AND THE ROMAN HOME

In good times and bad, individual Romans—like people everywhere at any time—tried to live a decent or even comfortable life with adequate shelter, food, and clothing. The Romans loved to have contact with the natural world. The middle classes enjoyed their gardens, wealthy city dwellers maintained rural estates, and Roman emperors had country villas that were both functioning farms and places of recreation. Wealthy Romans even brought nature indoors by commissioning artists to paint landscapes on the interior walls of their homes. Through the efforts of the modern archaeologists who have excavated them, Roman cities and towns, houses, apartments, and country villas still evoke for us the ancient Roman way of life with amazing clarity.

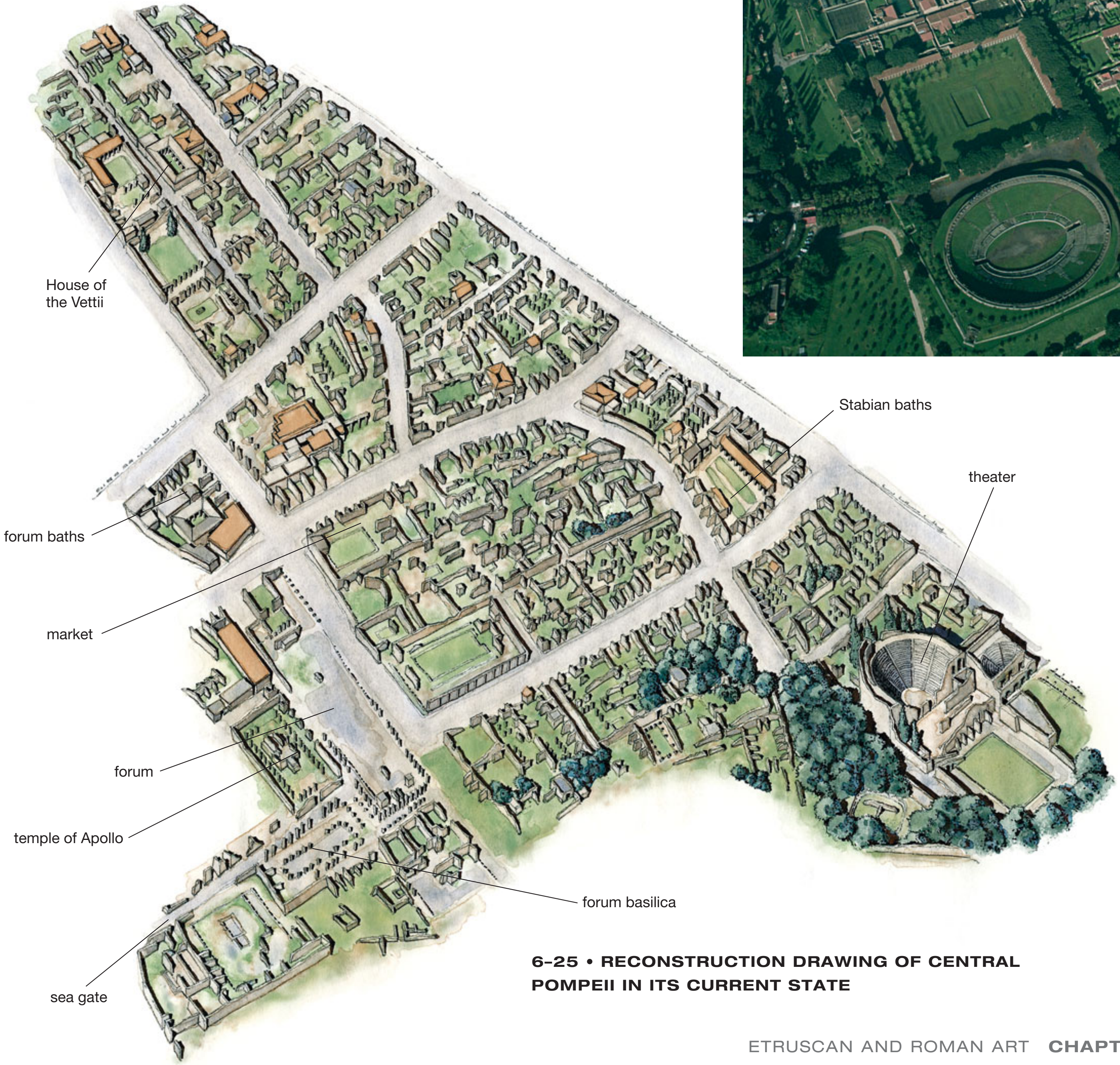
ROMAN CITIES Roman architects who designed new cities or who expanded and rebuilt existing ones based the urban plan on the layout of Roman army camps. Like Etruscan towns, they were designed as a grid with two bisecting main streets crossing at right angles to divide the layout into quarters. The **forum** and other public buildings were generally located at this intersection, where the commander's headquarters was placed in a military camp.

Much of the housing in a Roman city consisted of brick apartment blocks called *insulae*. These apartment buildings had internal courtyards, multiple floors joined by narrow staircases, and occasionally overhanging balconies. City dwellers—then as now—were social creatures who spent much of their lives in public markets, squares, theaters, baths, and neighborhood bars. The city dweller returned to the *insulae* to sleep, perhaps to eat. Even women enjoyed a public life outside the home—a marked contrast to the circumscribed lives of Greek women.

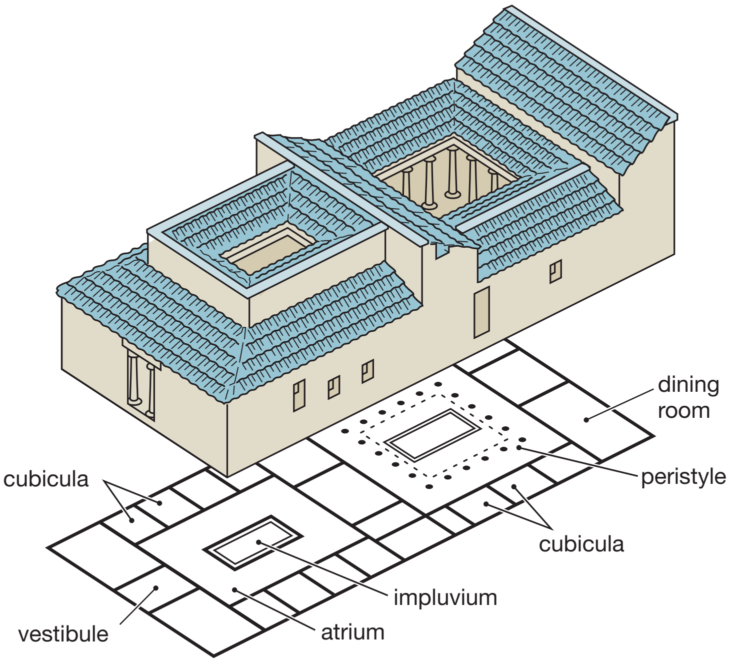
The affluent southern Italian city of Pompeii, a thriving center of between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, gives a vivid picture of Roman city life. In 79 CE Mount Vesuvius erupted, burying the city under more than 20 feet of volcanic ash and preserving it until its rediscovery and excavation, beginning in the eighteenth century (**FIGS. 6–24, 6–25**). Temples and government buildings surrounded a main square, or forum; shops and houses lined mostly straight, paved streets; and a protective wall enclosed the heart of the city. The forum was the center of civic life in Roman cities, as the agora was in Greek cities. Business was conducted in its basilicas and porticos, religious duties performed in its temples, and speeches delivered in its open square. For recreation, people went to the nearby baths or to events in the theater or amphitheater.



6–24 • AERIAL VIEW OF THE RUINS OF POMPEII
Destroyed 79 CE.


House of the Vettii
Stabian baths
theater
forum baths
market
forum
temple of Apollo
forum basilica
sea gate

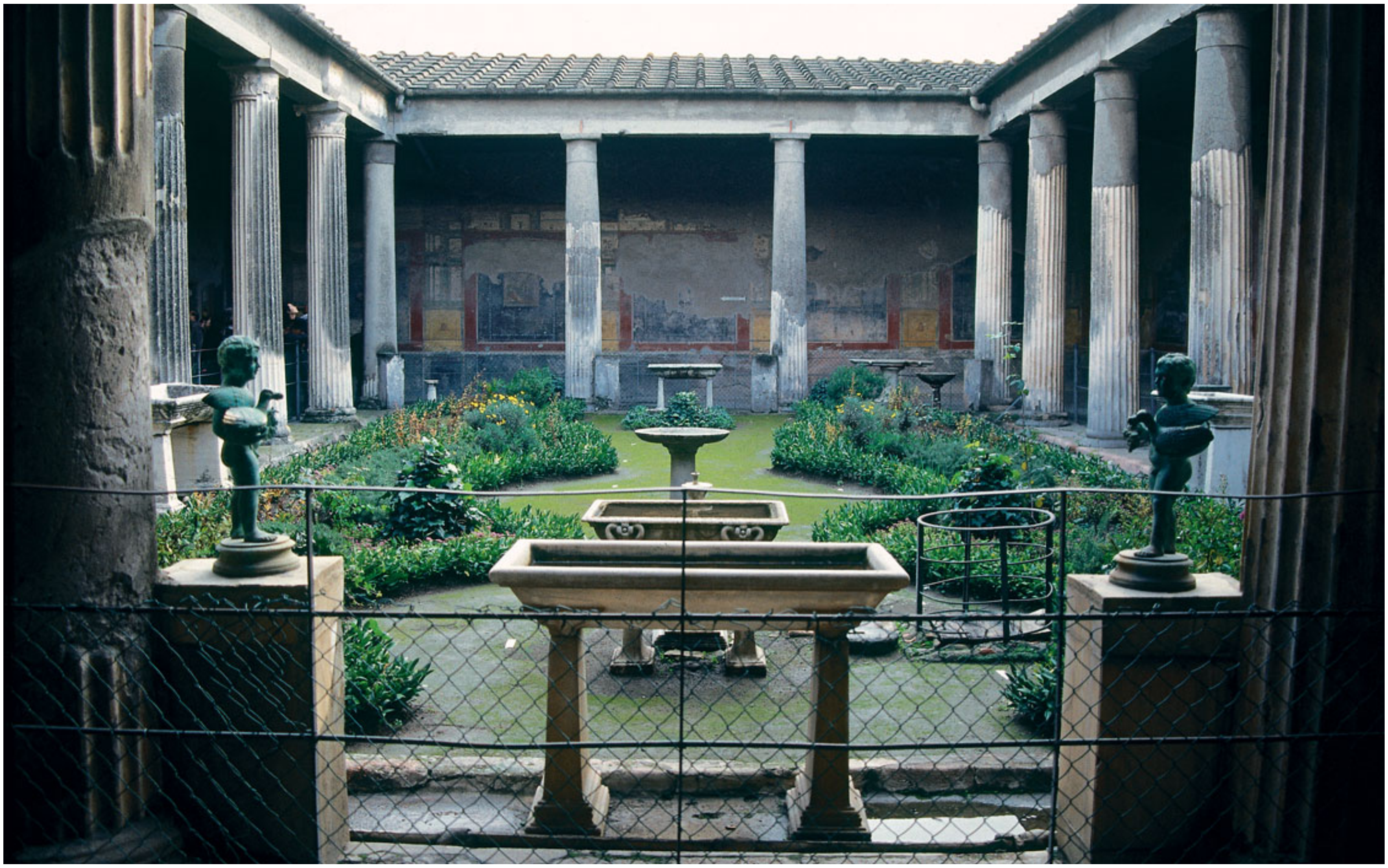
6–25 • RECONSTRUCTION DRAWING OF CENTRAL POMPEII IN ITS CURRENT STATE



6–26 • PLAN AND RECONSTRUCTION DRAWING OF THE HOUSE OF THE SILVER WEDDING
Pompeii. 1st century CE.

ROMAN HOUSES Wealthy city dwellers lived in private houses with enclosed gardens and were often fronted by shops facing the street. The Romans emphasized the interior rather than the exterior in such gracious domestic architecture.

A Roman house usually consisted of small rooms laid out around one or two open courts, the atrium and the peristyle (**FIG. 6–26**). People entered the house from the street through a vestibule and stepped into the atrium, a large space with an **impluvium** (pool for catching rainwater). The peristyle was a planted courtyard, farther into the house, enclosed by columns. Off the peristyle was the formal reception room or office called the tablinum, and here the head of the household conferred with clients. Portrait busts of the family's ancestors might be displayed in the tablinum or in the atrium. The private areas—such as the family dining and sitting rooms, as well as bedrooms (*cubicula*)—and service areas—such as the kitchen and servants' quarters—could be arranged around the peristyle or the atrium. In Pompeii, where the mild southern climate permitted gardens to flourish year-round, the peristyle was often turned into an outdoor living room with painted walls, fountains, and sculpture, as in the mid first-century CE remodeling of the second-century BCE **HOUSE OF THE VETTII** (**FIG. 6–27**). Since Roman houses were designed in relation to a



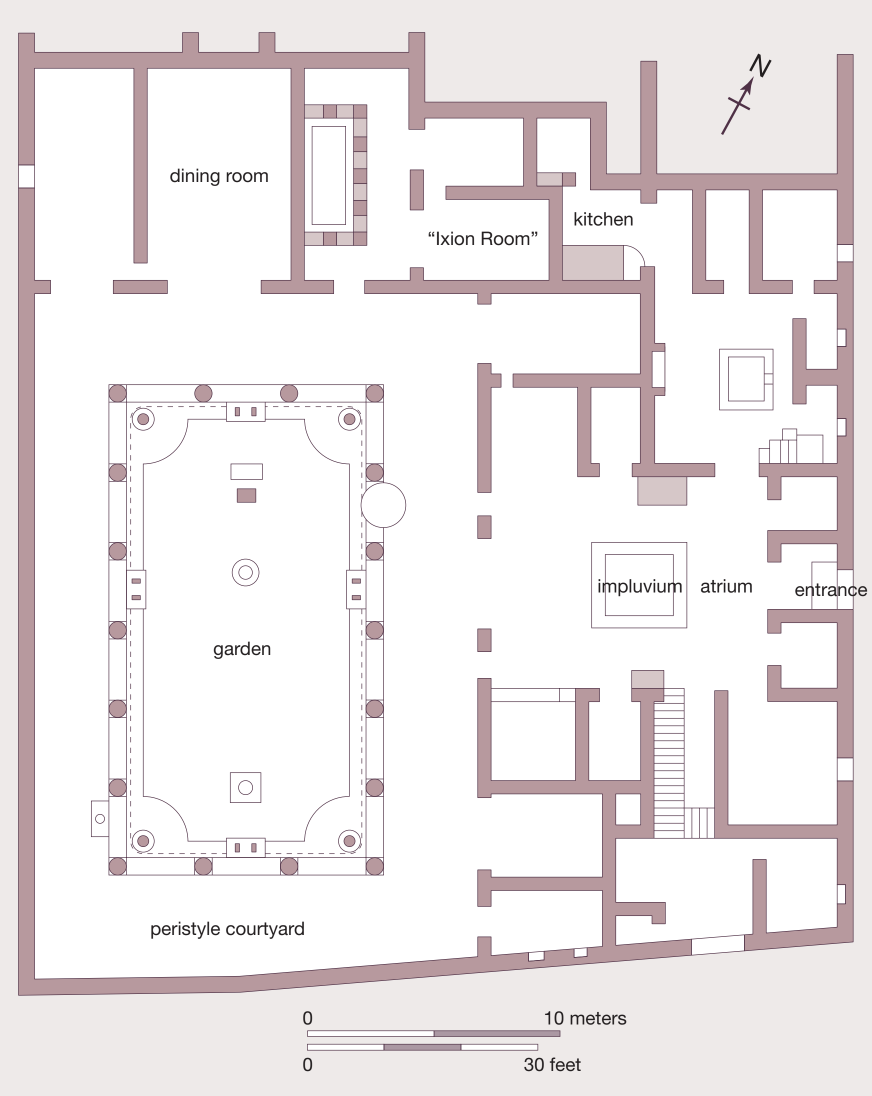
6–27 • PERISTYLE GARDEN, HOUSE OF THE VETTII
Pompeii. Rebuilt 62–79 CE.

long axis that runs from the entrance straight through the atrium and into the peristyle, visitors were greeted at the door of the house with a deep vista, showcasing the lavish residence of their host and its beautifully designed and planted gardens extending into the distance.

Little was known about these gardens until archaeologist Wilhelmina Jashemski (1910–2007) excavated the peristyle in the House of G. Polybius in Pompeii, beginning in 1973. Earlier archaeologists had usually ignored, or unwittingly destroyed, evidence of gardens, but Jashemski developed a new way to find and analyze the layout and the plants cultivated in them. Workers first removed layers of debris and volcanic material to expose the level of the soil as it was before the eruption in 79 CE. They then collected samples of pollen, seeds, and other organic material and carefully injected plaster into underground root cavities. When the surrounding earth was removed, the roots, now in plaster, enabled botanists to identify the types of plants and trees cultivated in the garden and to estimate their size.

The garden in the house of Polybius was surrounded on three sides by a portico, which protected a large cistern on one side that supplied the house and garden with water. Young lemon trees in pots lined the fourth side of the garden, and nail holes in the wall above the pots indicated that the trees had been espaliered—pruned and trained to grow flat against a support—a practice still in use today. Fig, cherry, and pear trees filled the garden space, and traces of a fruit-picking ladder, wide at the bottom and narrow at the top to fit among the branches, was found on the site.

An aqueduct built during the reign of Augustus eliminated Pompeii's dependence on wells and rainwater basins and allowed residents to add pools, fountains, and flowering plants that needed heavy watering to their gardens. In contrast to earlier, unordered plantings, formal gardens with low, clipped borders and plantings of ivy, ornamental boxwood, laurel, myrtle, acanthus, and rosemary—all mentioned by writers of the time—became fashionable. There is also evidence of topiary work, the clipping of shrubs and hedges into fanciful shapes, sculpture, and fountains. The peristyle garden of the House of the Vettii, for example, had more than a dozen fountain statues jetting water into marble basins (see FIG. 6–27). In the most elegant peristyles, mosaic decorations covered the floors, walls, and fountains.

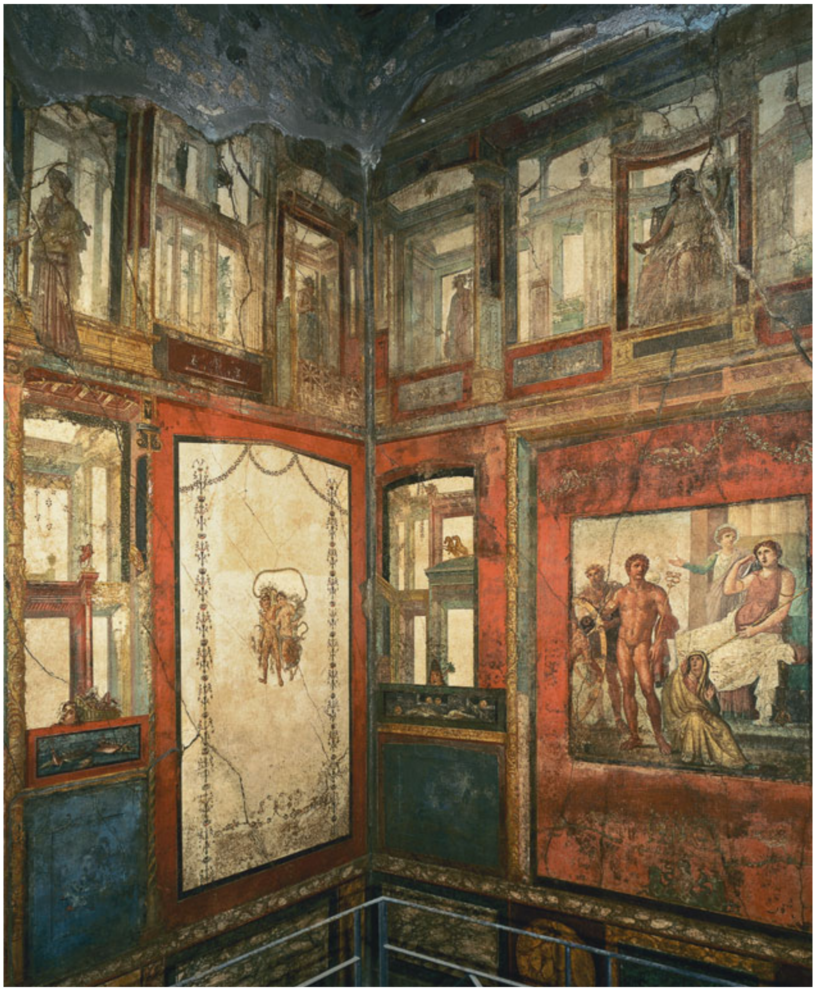


6–28 • PLAN OF THE HOUSE OF THE VETTII
Pompeii. Rebuilt 62–79 CE.

WALL PAINTING

The interior walls of Roman houses were plain, smooth plaster surfaces with few architectural moldings or projections. On these invitingly blank fields, artists painted decorations. Some used mosaic, but most employed pigment suspended in a water-based solution of lime and soap, sometimes with a little wax. After such paintings were finished, they were polished with a special metal, glass, or stone burnisher and then buffed with a cloth. Many fine wall paintings in a series of developing styles (see, "August Mau's Four Styles of Pompeian Painting," page 182) have come to light through excavations, first in Pompeii and other communities surrounding Mount Vesuvius, near Naples, and more recently in and around Rome.

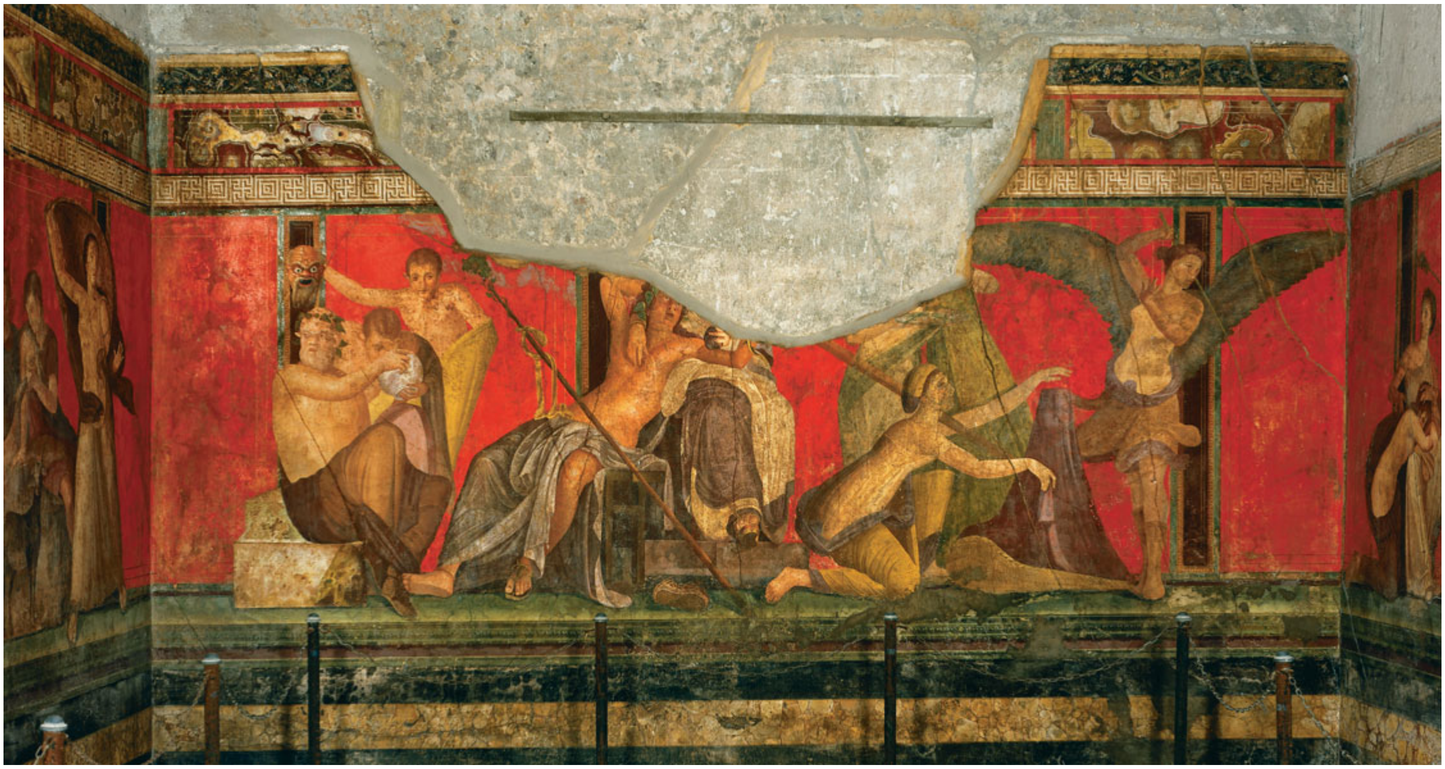
HOUSE OF THE VETTII Some of the finest surviving Roman wall paintings are found in the Pompeian House of the Vettii, whose peristyle garden we have already explored (see FIG. 6–27). The house was built in conformity to the axial house plan—with entrance leading through atrium to peristyle garden (**FIG. 6–28**)—by two



6–29 • WALL PAINTING IN THE "IXION ROOM," HOUSE OF THE VETTII
Pompeii. Rebuilt 62–79 CE.

brothers, wealthy freed slaves A. Vettius Conviva and A. Vettius Restitutus. Between its damage during an earthquake in 62 CE and the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE, the walls of the house were repainted, and this spectacular Fourth-Style decoration was uncovered in a splendid state of preservation during excavations at the end of the nineteenth century.

A complex combination of painted fantasies fills the walls of a reception room off the peristyle garden (**FIG. 6–29**). At the base of the walls is a lavish frieze of simulated colored-marble revetment, imitating the actual stone veneers that are found in some Roman residences. Above this "marble" dado are broad areas of pure red or white, onto which are painted pictures resembling framed panel paintings, swags of floral garlands, or unframed figural vignettes. The framed picture here illustrates a Greek mythological scene from the story of Ixion, who was bound by Zeus to a spinning wheel in punishment for attempting to seduce Hera. Between these pictorial fields, and along a long strip above them that runs around the entire room, are fantastic architectural vistas with multicolored columns and undulating



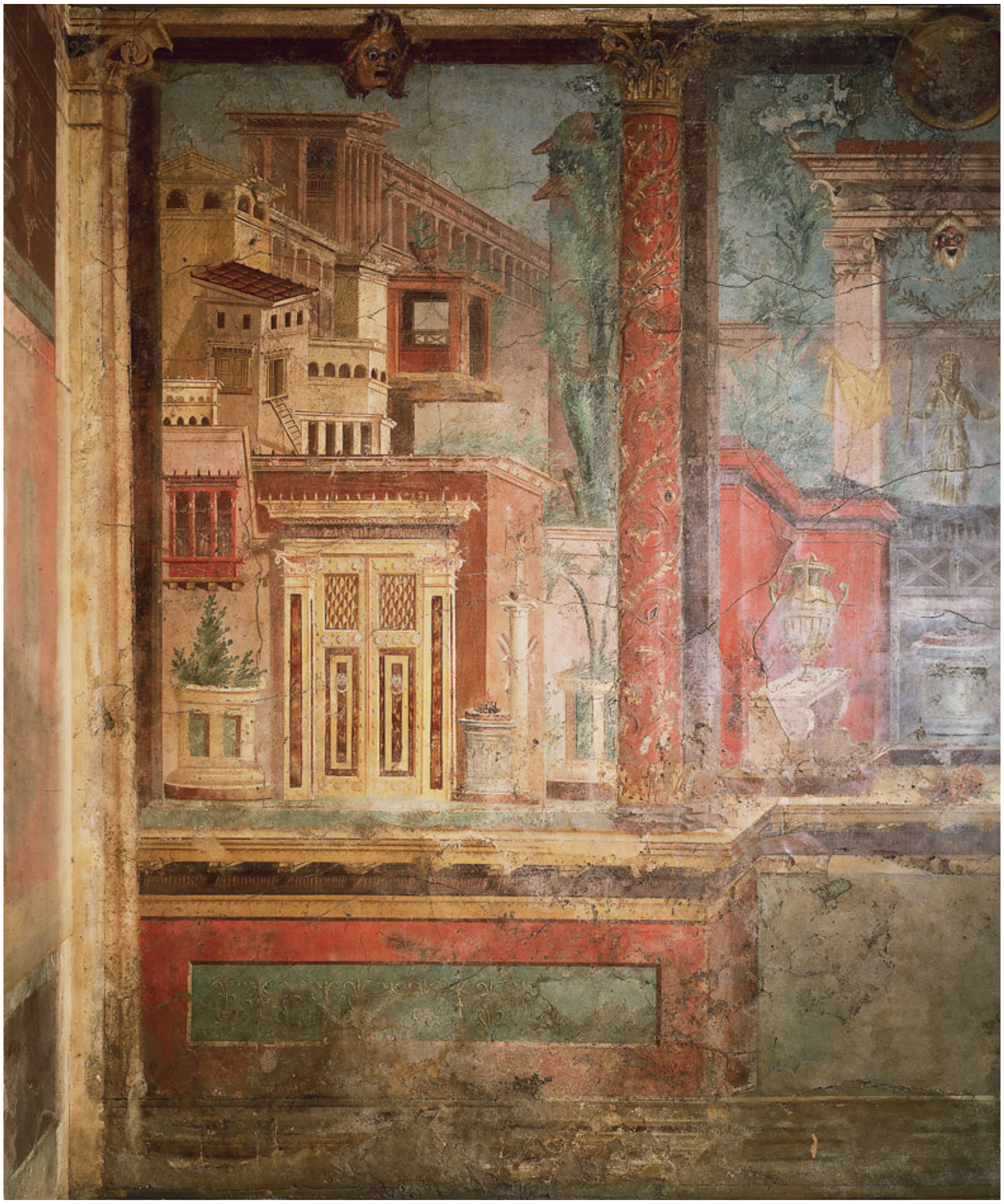
6–30 • INITIATION RITES OF THE CULT OF BACCHUS (?), VILLA OF THE MYSTERIES
Pompeii. Wall painting. c. 60–50 BCE.

entablatures that recede into fictive space through the use of fanciful linear perspective. The fact that this fictive architecture is occupied here and there by volumetric figures only enhances the sense of three-dimensional spatial definition.

VILLAS Villas were the country houses of wealthy Romans, and their plans, though resembling town houses, were often more expansive and irregular. The eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE preserved not only the houses along the city streets within Pompeii, but also the so-called **VILLA OF THE MYSTERIES** just outside the city walls. Here a series of elaborate figural murals from the mid first century BCE (**FIG. 6–30**) seem to portray the initiation rites of a mystery religion, probably the cult of Bacchus, which were often performed in private homes as well as in special buildings or temples. Perhaps this room in this villa was a shrine or meeting place for such a cult to this god of vegetation, fertility, and wine. Bacchus (or Dionysus) was one of the most important deities in Pompeii.

The entirely painted architectural setting consists of a simulated marble dado (similar to that which we saw in the House of the Vettii) and, around the top of the wall, an elegant frieze supported by painted pilaster strips. The figural scenes take place on a shallow "stage" along the top of the dado, with a background of a brilliant, deep red—now known as Pompeian red—that, as we have already seen, was very popular with Roman painters. The tableau unfolds around the entire room, perhaps depicting a succession of events that culminate in the acceptance of an initiate into the cult.

The walls of a room from another villa, this one at Boscoreale, farther removed from Pompeii and dating slightly later, open onto a fantastic urban panorama (**FIG. 6–31**). Surfaces seem to dissolve behind an inner frame of columns and lintels, opening onto a maze

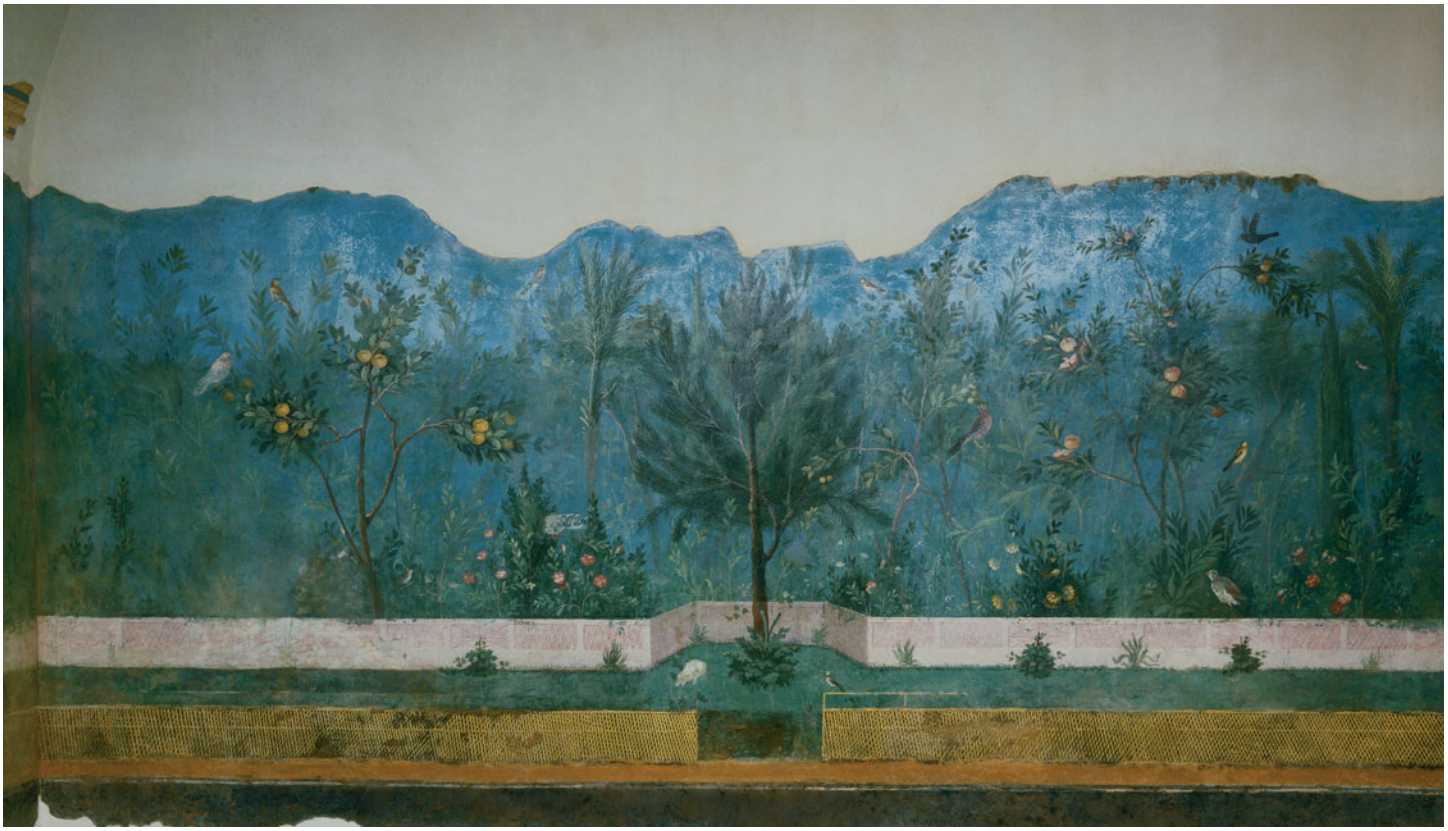


6–31 • CITYSCAPE, HOUSE OF PUBLIUS FANNIUS SYNISTOR
Boscoreale. Detail of a wall painting from a bedroom. c. 50–30 BCE. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Rogers Fund, 1903. (03.14.13)

ART AND ITS CONTEXTS | August Mau's Four Styles of Pompeian Painting

In the 1870s, German art historian August Mau (1840–1909), in an early analysis of Pompeian wall painting proposed a schematic organizing system that is still used by many today to categorize its stylistic development. In the earliest wall paintings from Pompeii, artists covered the walls with illusionistic paintings of thin slabs of colored marble and projecting architectural moldings. Mau referred to this as First-Style wall painting (c. 300–100 BCE). By about 100 BCE, painters began to extend the space of a room visually with scenes of figures on a shallow platform or with landscapes or cityscapes (see FIGS. 6–30, 6–31)—Mau's Second Style (c. 100–20 BCE). Starting in the late first century BCE, Third-Style wall painting replaced vistas with solid planes of color, decorated with slender, whimsical architectural and floral details and small, delicate vignettes (c. 20 BCE–c. 50 CE). In the final phase of Pompeian wall painting, the Fourth Style (c. 50–79 CE) united all three earlier styles into compositions of enormous complexity (see FIG. 6–29), where some wall surfaces seem to recede or even disappear behind a maze of floating architectural forms, while other flat areas of color become the support for simulated paintings of narrative scenes or still lifes (compositions of inanimate objects) (e.g., see FIG. 6–32).

of complicated architectural forms, like the painted scenic backdrops of a stage. Indeed, the theater may have inspired this kind of decoration, as the theatrical masks hanging from the lintels seem to suggest. By using a kind of **intuitive perspective**, the artists have created a general impression of real space beyond the wall. In intuitive perspective, the architectural details follow diagonal lines that the eye interprets as parallel lines receding into the distance, and objects meant to be perceived as far away from the surface plane of the wall are shown gradually smaller and smaller than those intended to appear in the foreground.



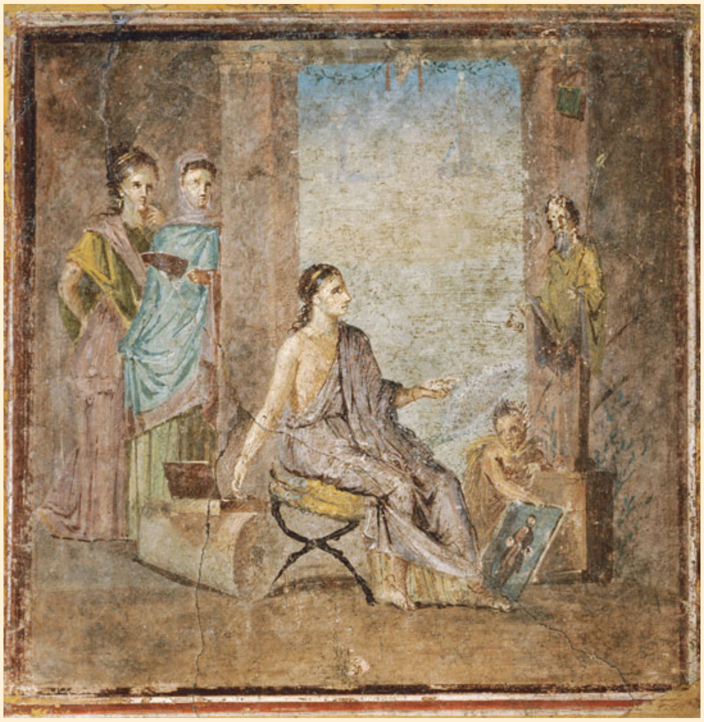
6–32 • GARDEN VISTA, VILLA OF LIVIA AT PRIMAPORTA
Near Rome. Late 1st century BCE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.

Like the garlands and curling vine scrolls on the Ara Pacis Augustae (see FIG. 6–20), the lush fertility of nature seems to celebrate the vitality and prosperity of Rome under Augustan peace.

ART AND ITS CONTEXTS | A Painter at Work

This fresco—portraying a painter absorbed in her art—once decorated the walls of a house in Pompeii (**FIG. 6–33**). Like women in Egypt and Crete, Roman women were far freer and more worldly than their Greek counterparts. Many received a formal education and became physicians, writers, shopkeepers, even overseers in such male-dominated businesses as shipbuilding. But we have little information about the role women played in the visual arts, making the testimony of this picture all the more precious.

The painter sits within a room that opens behind her to the outdoors, holding her **palette** in her left hand, a sign of her profession. She is dressed in a long robe, covered by an ample mantle, and her hair is pulled back by a gold headband; but lighting and composition highlight two other aspects of her body: her centralized face, which focuses intently on the subject of her painting—a sculptured rendering of the bearded fertility god Priapus appearing in the shadows of the right background—and her right arm, which extends downward so she can dip her brush into a paintbox that rests precariously on a rounded column drum next to her folding stool. A small child steadies the panel on which she paints, and two elegantly posed and richly dressed women—perhaps her patrons—stand next to a pier behind her. The art she is practicing reflects well on her social position. Pliny the Elder claimed that "Among artists, glory is given only to those who paint panel paintings" (*Natural History* 35.118). Wall paintings, he claimed, are of lesser value because they cannot be removed in case of fire. In this fresco, however, fixed positioning facilitated survival. When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 CE, it was wall paintings like this one that were preserved for rediscovery by eighteenth-century archaeologists.



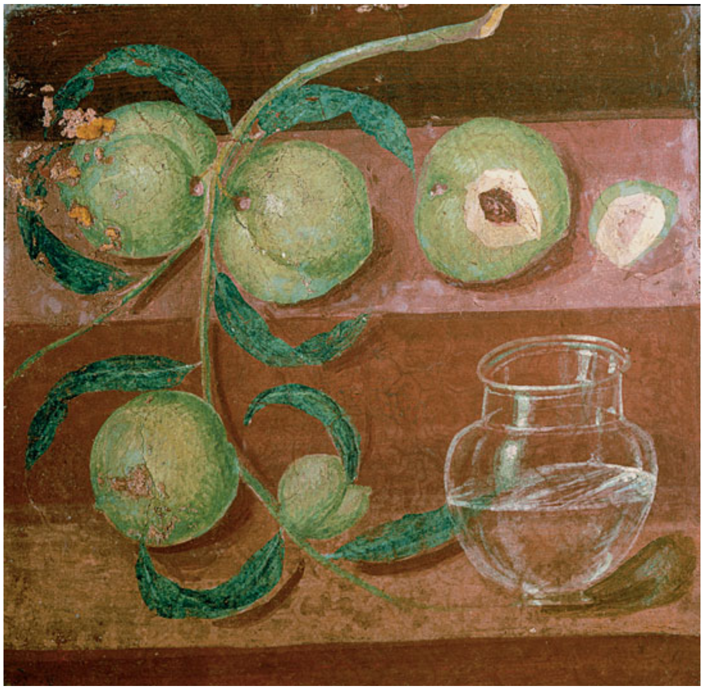
6-33 • A PAINTER AT WORK
From the House of the Surgeon, Pompeii. 1st century BCE–1st century CE. Fresco, 17⅞″ × 17⅜″ (45.5 × 45.3 cm). Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.

This painting of a female artist at work was conceived as a simulated panel painting, positioned on the yellow wall of a small room (compare the red wall in FIG. 6–29). It was revered so highly by the archaeologists who discovered it in 1771 that it was cut out of the wall to be exhibited as a framed picture in a museum, a practice that would be anathema today but was far from unusual in the eighteenth century.

Close to Rome, the late first-century BCE paintings on the dining-room walls of Livia's villa at Primaporta, exemplify yet another approach to creating a sense of expanded space with murals (**FIG. 6–32**). Instead of rendering a stage set or opening onto an expansive architectural vista, the artists here "dissolved" wall surfaces by creating the illusion of being on a porch or pavilion looking out over a low wall into an orchard of flowering shrubs and heavily laden fruit trees populated by a variety of wonderfully observed birds—an idealized view of the carefully cultivated natural world. Here the painters used **atmospheric perspective**, where the world becomes progressively less distinct as it recedes into the distance.

ROMAN REALISM IN DETAILS: STILL LIFES AND PORTRAITS In addition to cityscapes, landscapes and figural tableaux, other subjects that appeared in Roman art included exquisitely rendered genre scenes (see "A Painter at Work," above), still lifes, and portraits. A still-life panel from Herculaneum, a community in the vicinity of Mount Vesuvius near Pompeii, depicts everyday domestic objects—still-green peaches just picked from the tree and a glass jar half-filled with water (**FIG. 6–34**). The items have been carefully arranged on two stepped shelves to give the composition clarity and balance. A strong, clear light floods the picture from left to right, casting shadows, picking up highlights, and enhancing the illusion of solid objects in real space.

Few Pompeian paintings are more arresting than a double portrait of a young husband and wife (**FIG. 6–35**), who look out from their simulated spatial world beyond the wall into the viewers' space within the room. The swarthy, wispy-bearded man addresses us with a direct stare, holding a scroll in his left hand, a conventional attribute of educational achievement seen frequently in Roman portraits. Though his wife overlaps him to stake her claim to the foreground, her gaze out at us is less direct. She also holds fashionable attributes of literacy—the stylus she elevates in front of

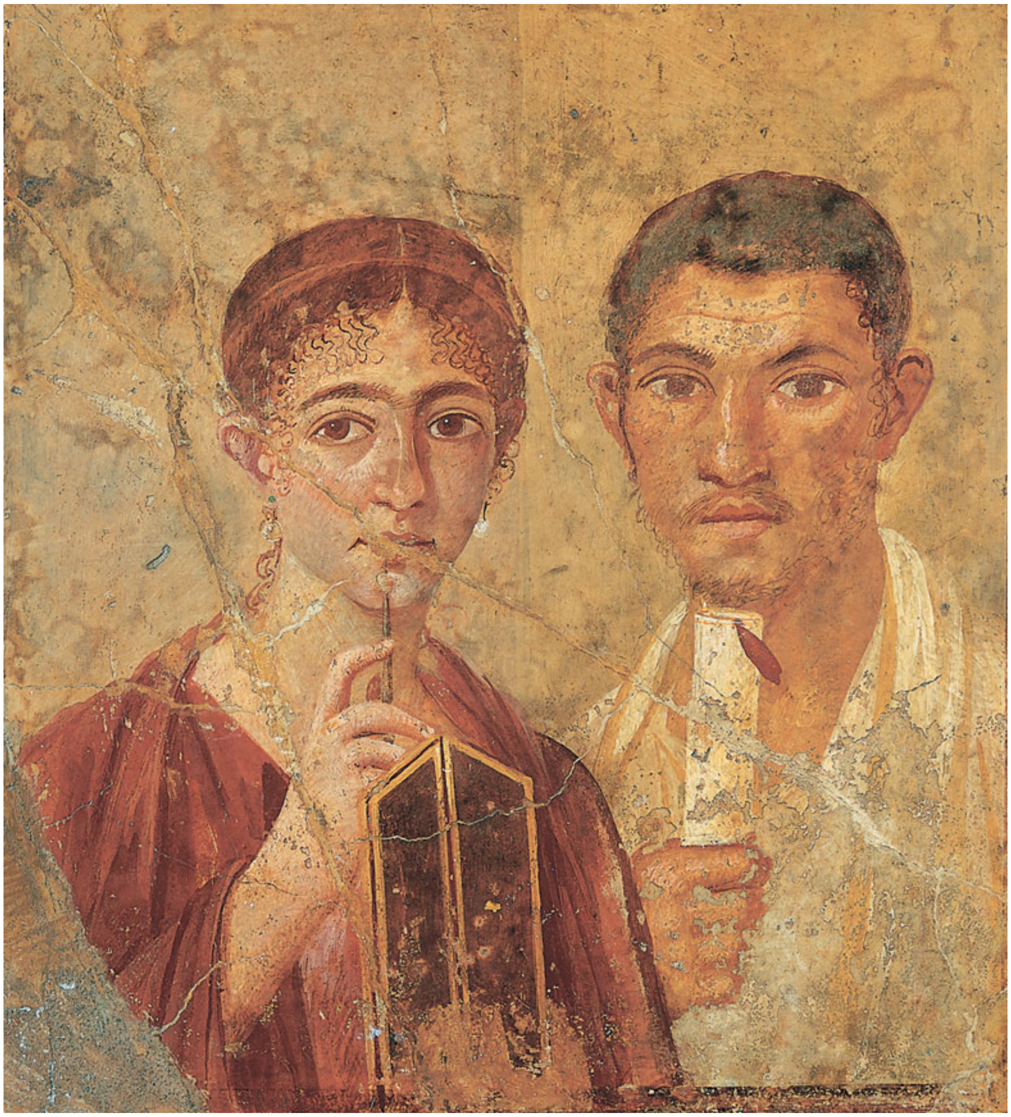


6–34 • STILL LIFE, HOUSE OF THE STAGS (CERVI)
Herculaneum. Detail of a wall painting. Before 79 CE. Approx. 1′2″ × 1′½″ (35.5 × 31.7 cm). Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.

her chin and the folding writing tablet on which she would have used the stylus to inscribe words into a wax infill. This picture is comparable to a modern studio portrait photograph—perhaps a wedding picture—with its careful lighting and retouching, conventional poses and accoutrements. But the attention to physiognomic detail—note the differences in the spacing of their eyes and the shapes of their noses, ears, and lips—makes it quite clear that we are in the presence of actual human likenesses.

THE FLAVIANS

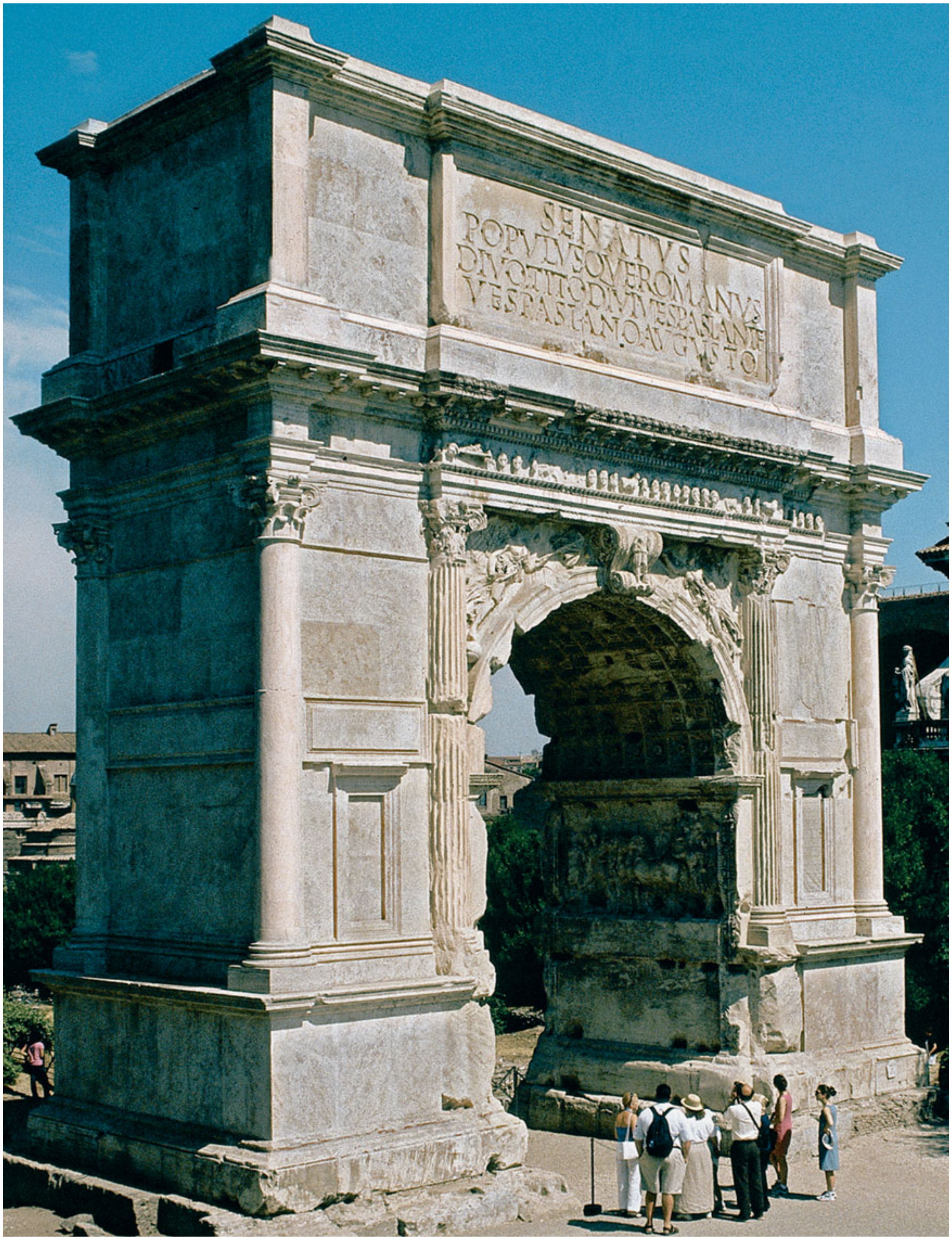
The Julio-Claudian dynasty ended with the suicide of Nero in 68 CE, which led to a brief period of civil war. Eventually an astute general, Vespasian, seized control of the government in 69 CE, founding a new dynasty known as the Flavian—practical military men who inspired confidence and ruled for the rest of the first century, restoring the imperial finances and stabilizing the frontiers. They replaced the Julio-Claudian fashion for classicizing imperial portraiture with a return to the ideal of time-worn faces, enhancing the effects of old age.



6–35 • PORTRAIT OF A MARRIED COUPLE
Wall painting from Pompeii. Mid 1st century CE. Height 25½″ (64.8 cm). Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.

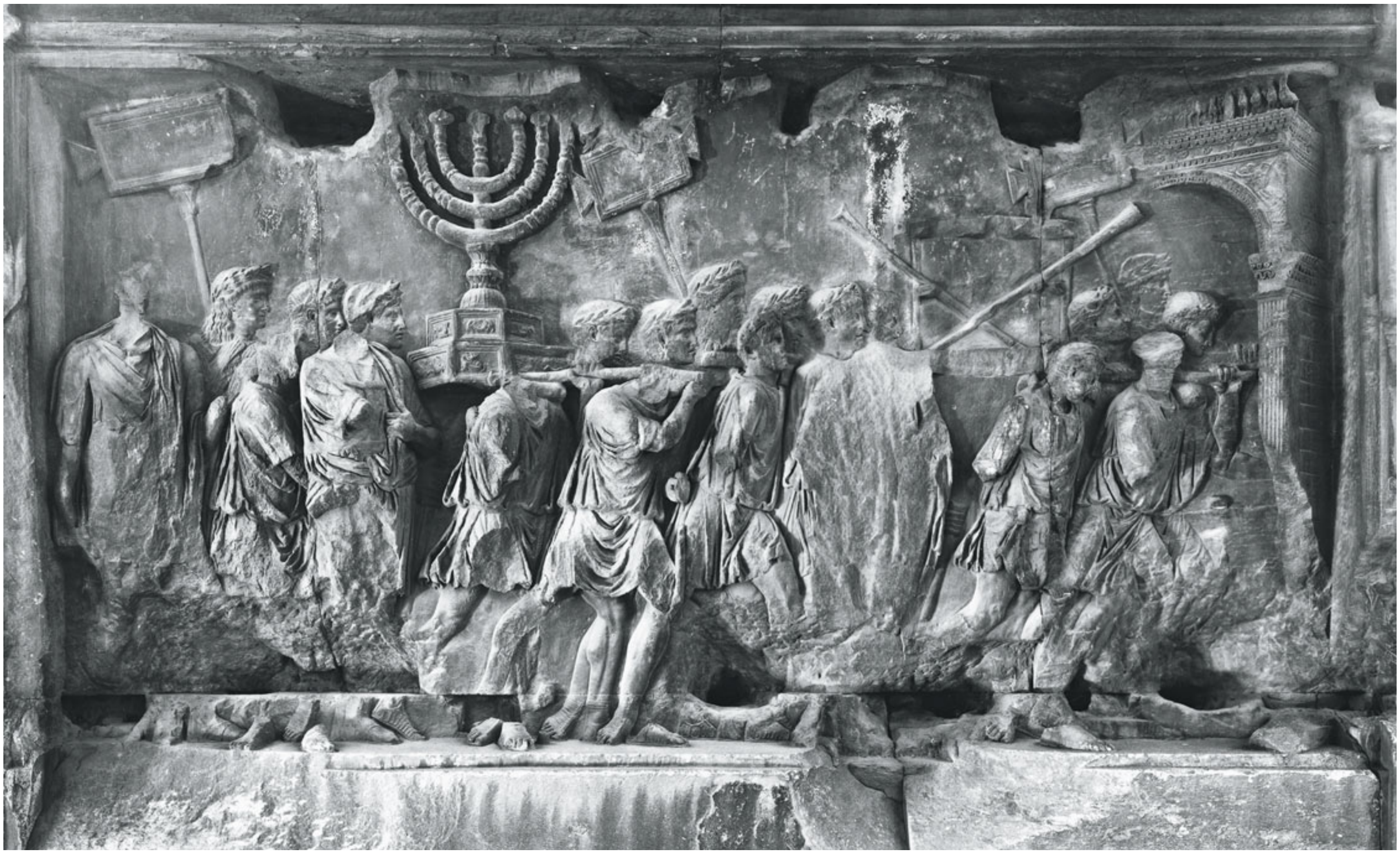
THE ARCH OF TITUS When Domitian assumed the throne in 81 CE, he immediately commissioned a triumphal arch to honor the capture of Jerusalem in 70 CE by his brother and deified predecessor, Titus. Part architecture, part sculpture, and distinctly Roman, free-standing triumphal arches commemorate a triumph, or formal victory celebration, during which a victorious general or emperor paraded through Rome with his troops, captives, and booty. Constructed of concrete and faced with marble, **THE ARCH OF TITUS** (**FIG. 6–36**) is essentially a free-standing gateway whose passage is covered by a barrel vault and which served as a giant base, 50 feet tall, for a lost bronze statue of the emperor in a four-horse chariot, a typical triumphal symbol. Applied to the faces of the arch are columns in the Composite order supporting an entablature. The inscription on the uppermost, or attic, story declares that the Senate and the Roman people erected the monument to honor Titus.

Titus' capture of Jerusalem ended a fierce campaign to crush a revolt of the Jews in Palestine. The Romans sacked and destroyed



6–36 • THE ARCH OF TITUS
Rome. c. 81 CE (restored 1822–1824). Concrete and white marble, height 50′ (15 m).

The dedication inscribed across the tall attic story above the arch opening reads: "The Senate and the Roman people to the Deified Titus Vespasian Augustus, son of the Deified Vespasian." The perfectly sized and spaced Roman capital letters meant to be read from a distance and cut with sharp terminals (serifs) to catch the light established a standard that calligraphers and font designers still follow.



6–37 • SPOILS FROM THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM
Relief in the passageway of the Arch of Titus. Marble, height 6′8″ (2.03 m).

the Temple in Jerusalem, carried off its sacred treasures, then displayed them in a triumphal procession in Rome (**FIG. 6–37**). A relief on the inside walls of the arch, capturing the drama of the occasion, depicts Titus' soldiers flaunting this booty as they carry it through the streets of Rome. The soldiers are headed toward the right and through an arch, turned obliquely to project into the viewers' own space, thus allowing living spectators a sense of the press of a boisterous, disorderly crowd. They might expect at any moment to hear soldiers and onlookers shouting and chanting.

The mood of the procession depicted in this relief contrasts with the relaxed but formal solemnity of the procession portrayed on the Ara Pacis (see FIG. 6–22), but like the sculptors of the Ara Pacis, the sculptors of the Arch of Titus showed the spatial relationships among figures by varying the depth of the relief to render nearer elements in higher relief than those more distant. A **menorah** (seven-branched lampholder) from the Temple in Jerusalem dominates the scene, rendered as if seen from the low point of view of a spectator at the event.

THE FLAVIAN AMPHITHEATER Romans were huge sports fans, and the Flavian emperors catered to their tastes by building splendid facilities. Construction of the **FLAVIAN AMPHITHEATER**, Rome's greatest arena (**FIGS. 6–38, 6–39**), began under Vespasian in 70 CE and was completed under Titus, who dedicated it in 80 CE. The Flavian Amphitheater came to be known as the "Colosseum," because a gigantic statue of Nero called the *Colossus* stood next to it. "Colosseum" is a most appropriate description of this enormous entertainment center. Its outer wall stands 159 feet high. It is an oval, measuring 615 by 510 feet, with a floor 280 by 175 feet. This floor was laid over a foundation of service rooms and tunnels that provided an area for the athletes, performers, animals, and equipment. The floor was covered by sand, *arena* in Latin, hence the English term "arena" for a building of this type.

Roman audiences watched a variety of athletic events, blood sports, and spectacles, including animal hunts, fights to the death between gladiators or between gladiators and wild animals, performances of trained animals and acrobats, and even mock sea battles, for which the arena would be flooded. The opening performances in 80 CE lasted 100 days, during which time it was claimed that 9,000 wild animals and 2,000 gladiators died for the amusement of the spectators.

The amphitheater is such a remarkable piece of planning—with easy access, perfect sight lines, and effective crowd control—that stadiums today still use this efficient plan. Some 50,000 spectators could move easily through the 76 entrance doors to the

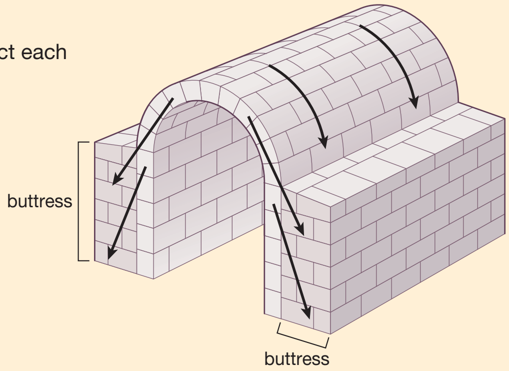
ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE | Roman Vaulting

The Romans became experts in devising methods of covering large, open architectural spaces with concrete and masonry, using barrel vaults, groin vaults, or domes.

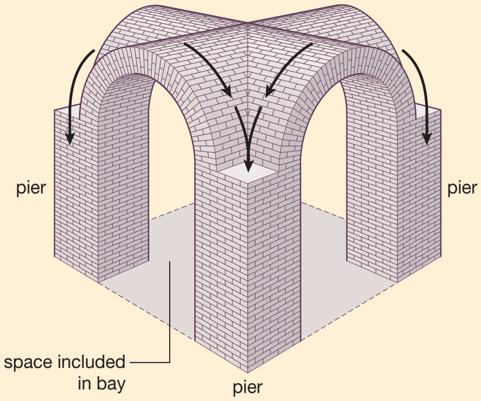
A **barrel vault** is constructed in the same manner as the round arch (see "The Roman Arch," page 170). In a sense, it is a series of connected arches extended in sequence along a line. The outward pressure exerted by the curving sides of the barrel vault requires buttressing within or outside the supporting walls.

When two barrel-vaulted spaces intersect each other at the same level, the result is a **groin vault**. Both the weight and outward thrust of the groin vault are concentrated on four corner piers; only the piers require buttressing, so the walls on all four sides can be opened. The Romans used the groin vault to construct some of their grandest interior spaces.

A third type of vault brought to technical perfection by the Romans is the **dome**. The rim of the dome is supported on a circular wall, as in the Pantheon (see FIGS. 6–49, 6–50, 6–52). This wall is called a drum when it is raised on top of a main structure. Sometimes a circular opening, called an **oculus**, is left at the top.



barrel vault

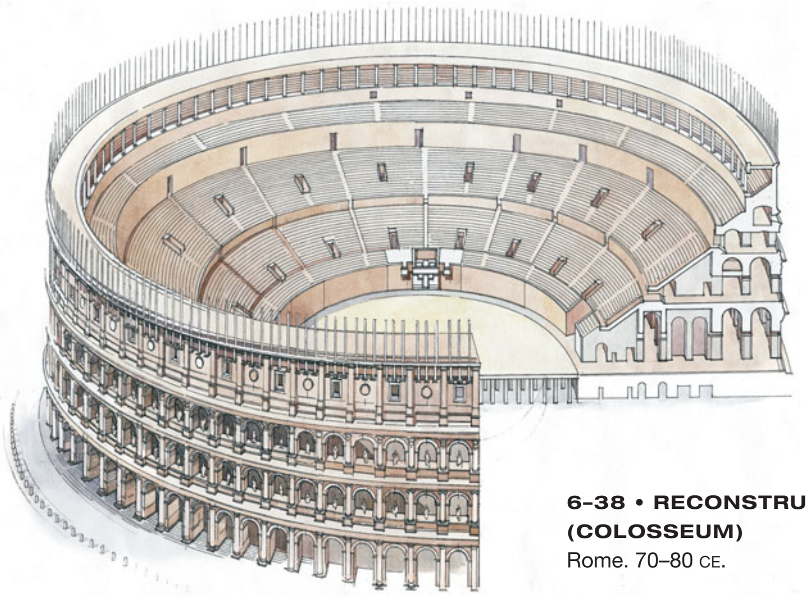


groin vault

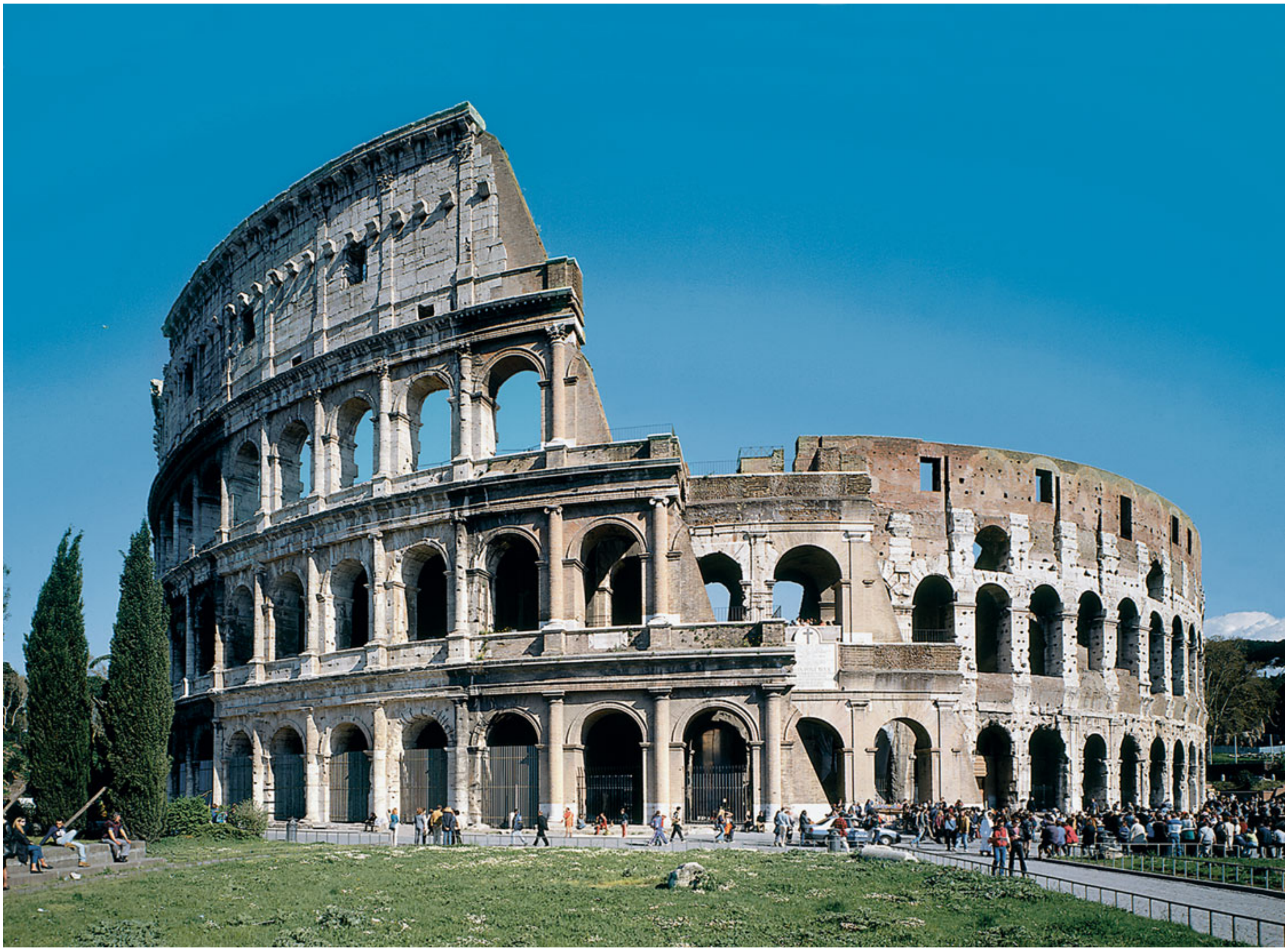
Watch an architectural simulation about the groin vault on myartslab.com

three levels of seats—laid over barrel-vaulted access corridors and entrance tunnels—and the standing area at the top. Each spectator had an uninterrupted view of the events below, and the walls on the top level supported a huge awning that could shade the seats. Sailors, who had experience in handling ropes, pulleys, and large expanses of canvas, worked the apparatus that extended the awning.

The curving, outer wall of the Colosseum consists of three levels of arcades surmounted by a wall-like attic (top) story. Each arch is framed by engaged columns. Entablature-like friezes mark the divisions between levels. Each level also uses a different architectural order, increasing in complexity from bottom to top: the plain Tuscan order on the ground level, Ionic on the second level, Corinthian on the third, and Corinthian pilasters on the fourth. The attic story is broken by small, square windows, which originally alternated with gilded-bronze shield-shaped ornaments called **cartouches**, supported on brackets that are still in place.



6–38 • RECONSTRUCTION DRAWING OF THE FLAVIAN AMPHITHEATER (COLOSSEUM)
Rome. 70–80 CE.

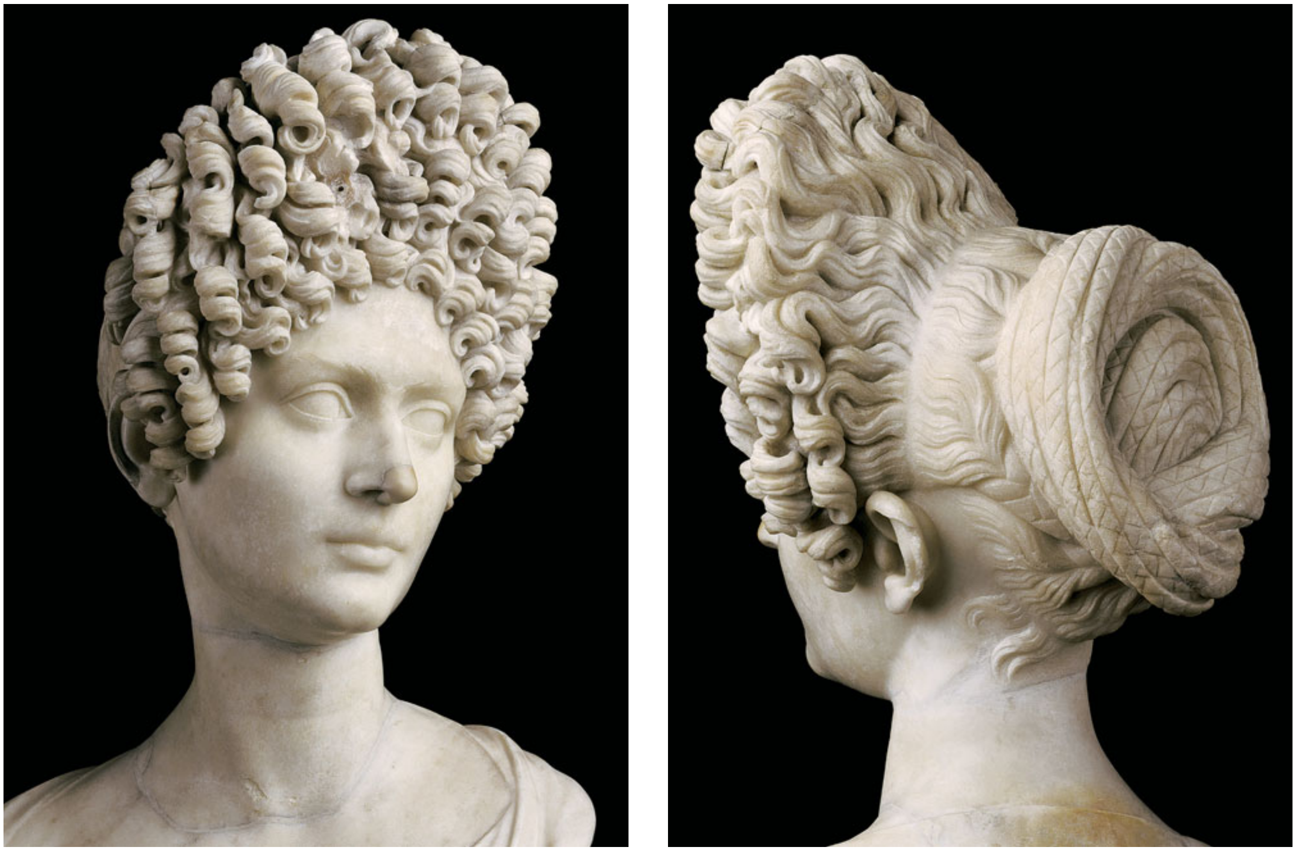


6–39 • OUTER WALL OF THE FLAVIAN AMPHITHEATER
Rome. 70–80 CE.

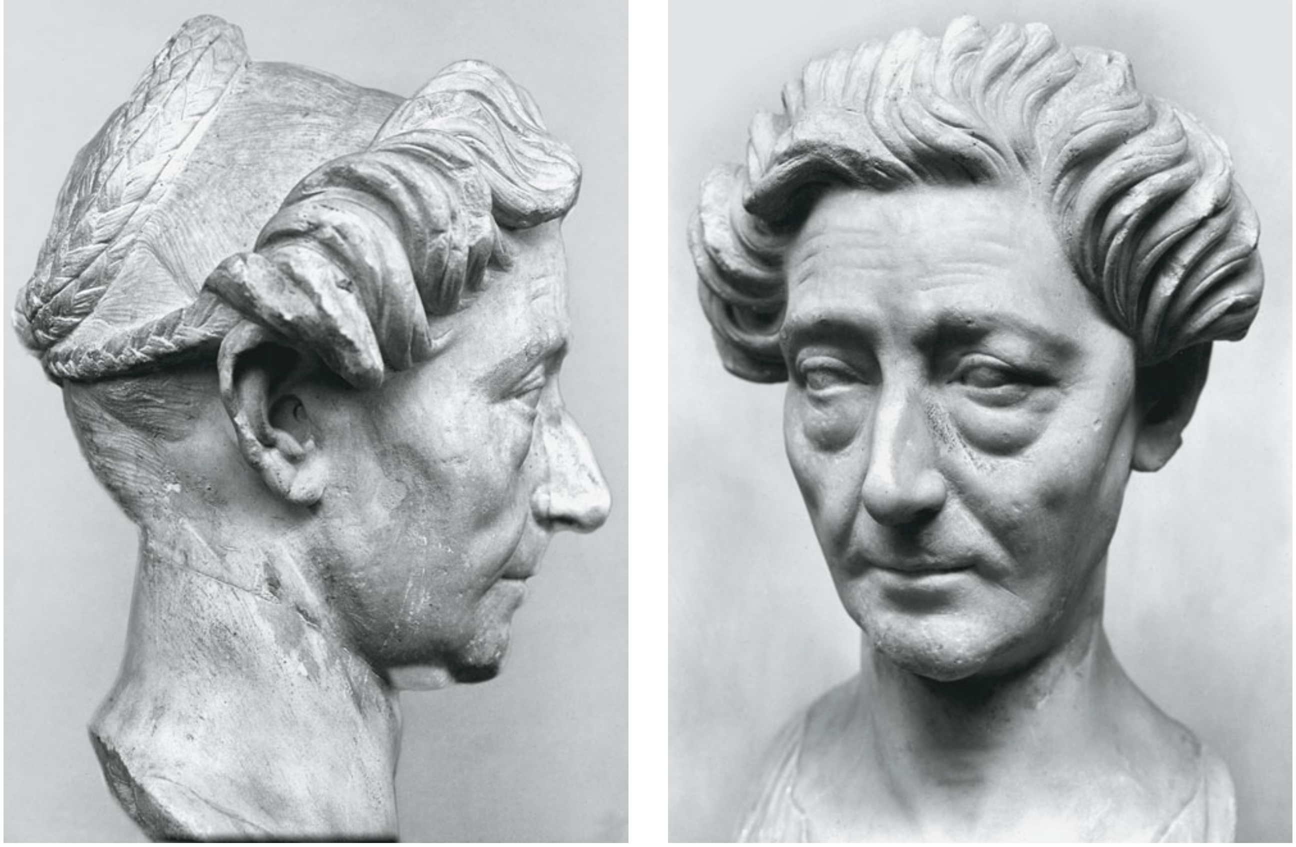
All these elements are purely decorative. As we saw in the Etruscan Porta Augusta (see FIG. 6–2), the addition of post-and-lintel decoration to arched structures was an Etruscan innovation. The systematic use of the orders in a logical succession from sturdy Tuscan to lighter Ionic to decorative Corinthian follows a tradition inherited from Hellenistic architecture. This orderly, dignified, and visually satisfying way of organizing the façades of large buildings is still popular. Unfortunately, much of the Colosseum was dismantled in the Middle Ages as a source of marble, metal fittings, and materials for buildings such as churches.

PORTRAIT SCULPTURE Roman patrons continued to expect recognizable likenesses in their portraits, but this did not preclude idealization. A portrait sculpture of a **YOUNG FLAVIAN WOMAN** (**FIG. 6–40**) is idealized in a manner similar to the *Augustus of Primaporta* (see FIG. 6–19). Her well-observed, recognizable features—a strong nose and jaw, heavy brows, deep-set eyes, and a long neck—contrast with the smoothly rendered flesh and soft, sensual lips. Her hair is piled high in an extraordinary mass of ringlets following the latest court fashion. Executing the head required skillful chiseling and **drillwork**, a technique for rapidly cutting deep grooves with straight sides, used here to render the holes in the center of the curls. The overall effect, especially from a distance, is quite lifelike, as the play of natural light over the subtly sculpted marble surfaces simulates the textures of real skin and hair.

A contemporary bust of an older woman (**FIG. 6–41**) presents a strikingly different image of its subject. Although she also wears her hair in the latest fashion, it is less elaborate and less painstakingly confected and carved than that of her younger counterpart. The work emphasizes not the fresh sheen of an unblemished face, but a visage clearly marked by the passage of time during a life well lived. We may regard this portrait as less idealized and more naturalistic, but for a Roman viewer, it conformed to an ideal of age and accomplishment by showcasing signs of aging facial features, cherished since the Republican period as reflections of virtue and venerability.



6–40 • YOUNG FLAVIAN WOMAN
c. 90 CE. Marble, height 25″ (65.5 cm). Museo Capitolino, Rome.



6–41 • MIDDLE-AGED FLAVIAN WOMAN
Late 1st century CE. Marble, height 9½″ (24.1 cm). Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano, ex-Lateranese, Rome.

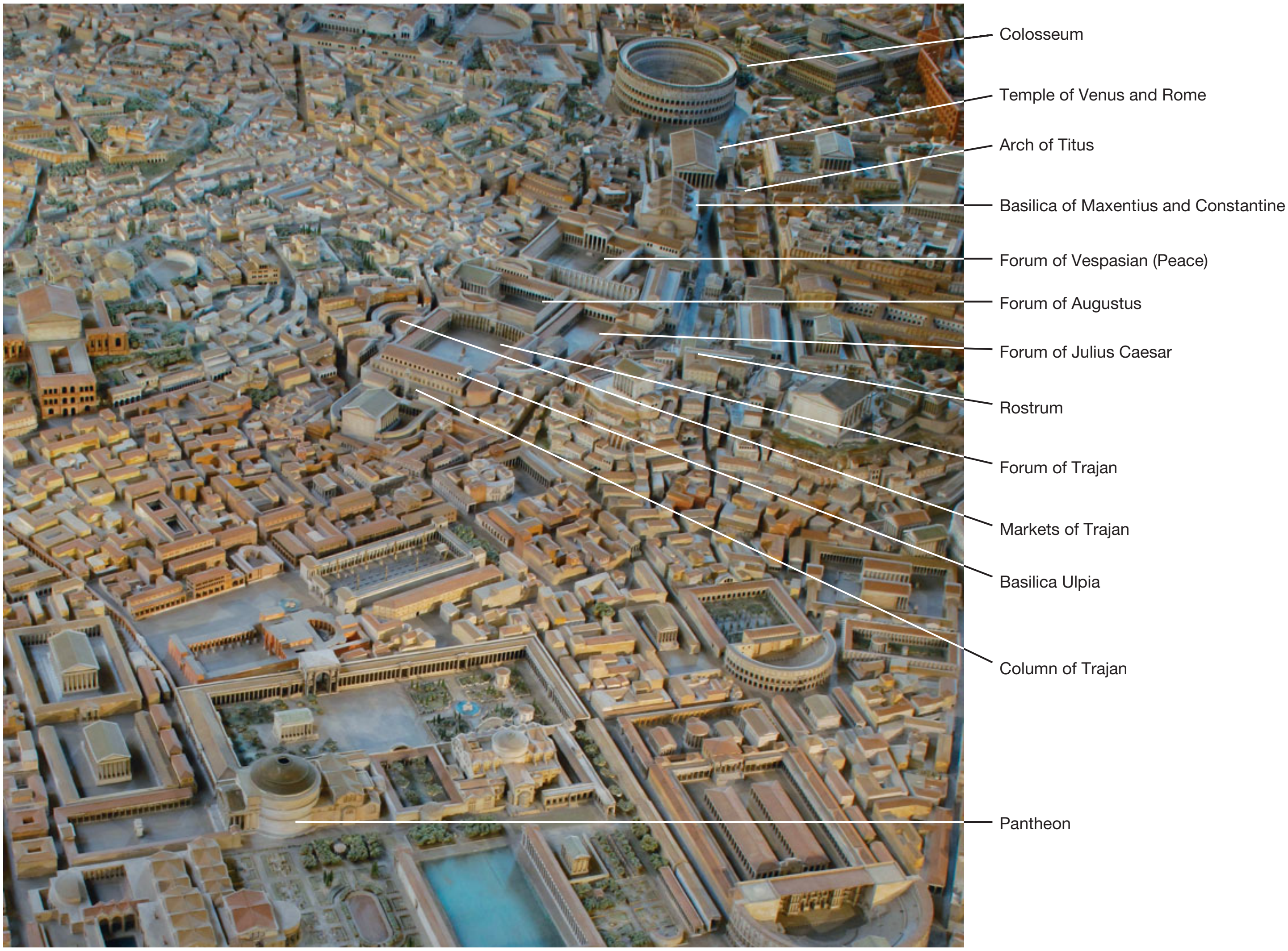
THE HIGH IMPERIAL ART OF TRAJAN AND HADRIAN

Domitian, the last Flavian emperor, was assassinated in 96 CE and succeeded by a senator, Nerva (r. 96–98 CE), who designated as his successor Trajan, a general born in Spain who had commanded Roman troops in Germany. For nearly a century, the empire was under the control of brilliant administrators. Instead of depending on the vagaries of fate (or genetics) to produce intelligent heirs, the emperors Nerva (r. 96–98 CE), Trajan (r. 98–117 CE), Hadrian (r. 117–138 CE), and Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161 CE)—but not his successor, Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180 CE)—each selected an able administrator to follow him, thus "adopting" his successor. Italy and the provinces flourished, and official and private patronage of the arts increased.

Under Trajan, the empire reached its greatest territorial expanse. By 106 CE, he had conquered Dacia, roughly present-day Romania (see MAP 6–1), and his successor, Hadrian, consolidated the empire's borders and imposed far-reaching social, governmental, and military reforms. Hadrian was well educated and widely traveled, and his admiration for Greek culture spurred new building programs and classicizing works of art throughout the empire. Unfortunately, Marcus Aurelius broke the tradition of adoption and left his son, Commodus, to inherit the throne. Within 12 years, Commodus (r. 180–192 CE) had destroyed the stable government his predecessors had so carefully built.

IMPERIAL ARCHITECTURE

The Romans believed their rule extended to the ends of the Western world, but the city of Rome remained the nerve center of the empire. During his long and peaceful reign, Augustus had paved the city's old Republican Forum, restored its temples and basilicas, and followed Julius Caesar's example by building an Imperial Forum. These projects marked the beginning of a continuing effort to transform the capital into a magnificent monument to imperial rule. Such grand structures as the Imperial Forums, the Colosseum, the Circus Maximus (a track for chariot races), the Pantheon, and aqueducts stood amid the temples, baths, warehouses, and homes

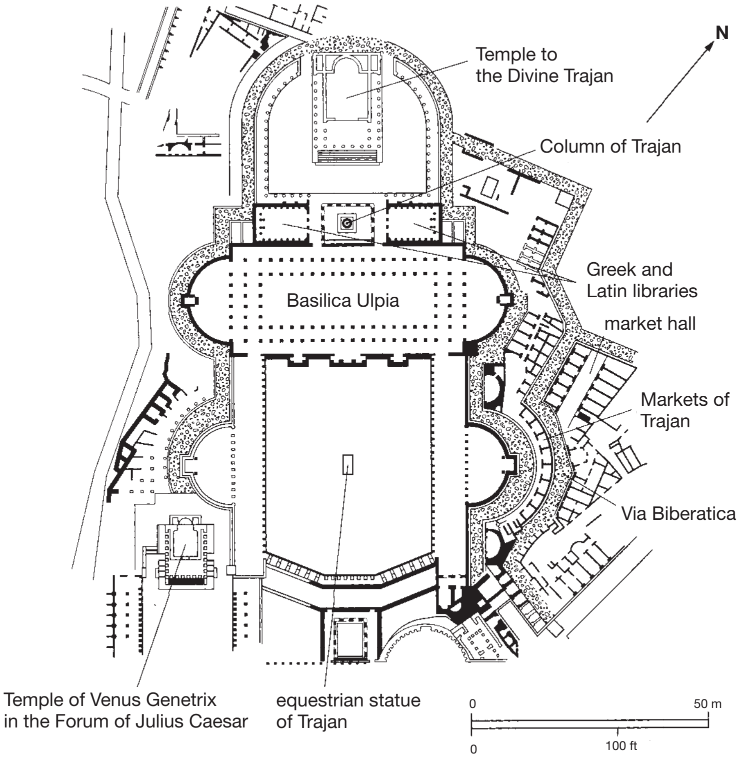

Colosseum
Temple of Venus and Rome
Arch of Titus
Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine
Forum of Vespasian (Peace)
Forum of Augustus
Forum of Julius Caesar
Rostrum
Forum of Trajan
Markets of Trajan
Basilica Ulpia
Column of Trajan
Pantheon

6–42 • MODEL OF IMPERIAL ROME IN c. 324 CE

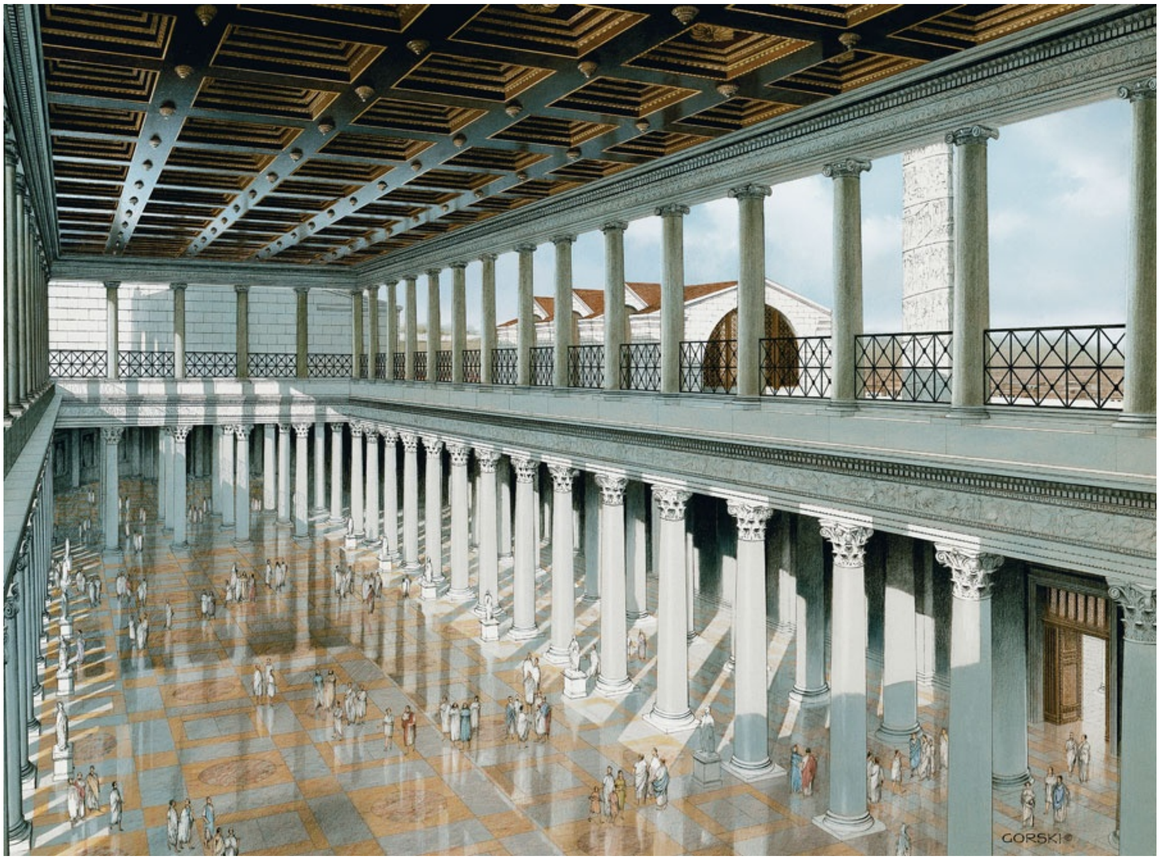
in the city center as expressions of successive emperors' beneficence and their desire to leave their mark on, and preserve their memory in, the capital. A model of Rome's city center makes apparent the dense building plan (**FIG. 6–42**).

THE FORUM OF TRAJAN The last and largest Imperial Forum was built by Trajan about 110–113 CE and finished under Hadrian about 117 CE on a large piece of property next to the earlier forums of Augustus and Julius Caesar (**FIG. 6–43**). For this major undertaking, Trajan chose a Greek architect, Apollodorus of Damascus, who was experienced as a military engineer. A straight, central axis leads from the Forum of Augustus through a triple-arched gate surmounted by a bronze chariot group into a large, colonnaded square with a statue of Trajan on horseback at its center. Closing off the courtyard at the north end was the **BASILICA ULPIA** (**FIG. 6–44**), dedicated in c. 112 CE, and named for the family to which Trajan belonged.

A **basilica** was a large, rectangular building with an extensive interior space, adaptable for a variety of administrative governmental functions. The Basilica Ulpia was a court of law, but other basilicas served as imperial audience chambers, army drill halls, and schools. The Basilica Ulpia was a particularly grand interior space, 385 feet long (not including the apses) and 182 feet wide. A large central area (the **nave**) was flanked by double colonnaded aisles surmounted by open galleries or by a clerestory, an upper nave wall with windows. The timber truss roof

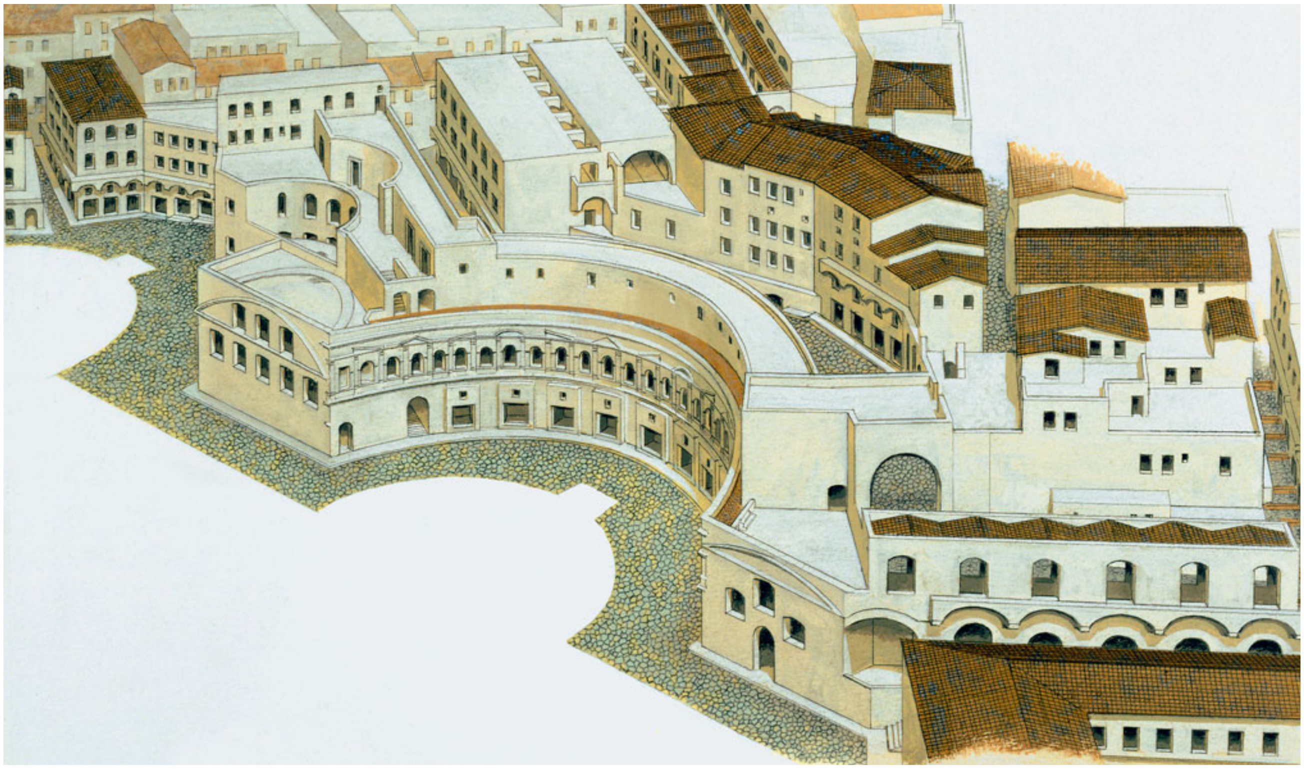

N
Temple to the Divine Trajan
Column of Trajan
Greek and Latin libraries
market hall
Basilica Ulpia
Markets of Trajan
Via Biberatica
Temple of Venus Genetrix in the Forum of Julius Caesar
equestrian statue of Trajan
0
50 m
0
100 ft

6–43 • PLAN OF TRAJAN'S FORUM AND MARKET
c. 110–113 CE.



6–44 • Gilbert Gorski **RESTORED PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE CENTRAL HALL, BASILICA ULPIA**
Rome. As it was c. 112 CE.

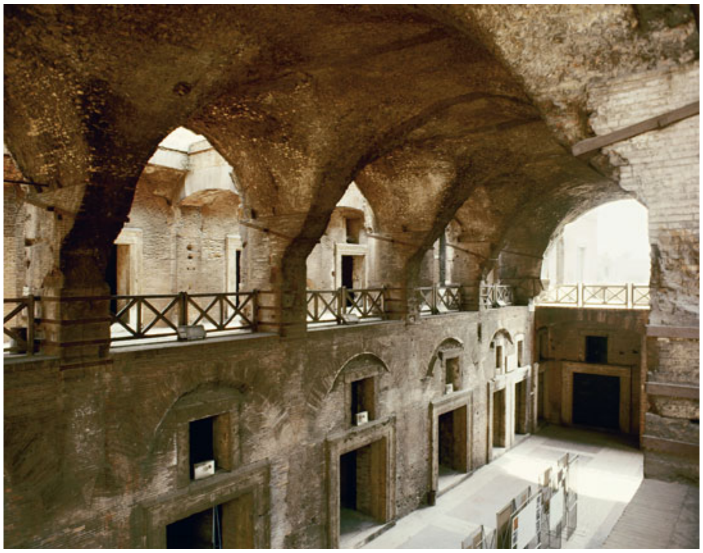
Trajan's architect was Apollodorus of Damascus. The building may have had clerestory windows instead of the gallery shown in this drawing. The Column of Trajan can be seen through the upper colonnade at right.



6–45 • RECONSTRUCTION DRAWING OF TRAJAN'S MARKET
Rome. As it was 100–112 CE.

had a span of about 80 feet. The two **apses**, rounded extensions at each end of the building, provided imposing settings for judges when the court was in session.

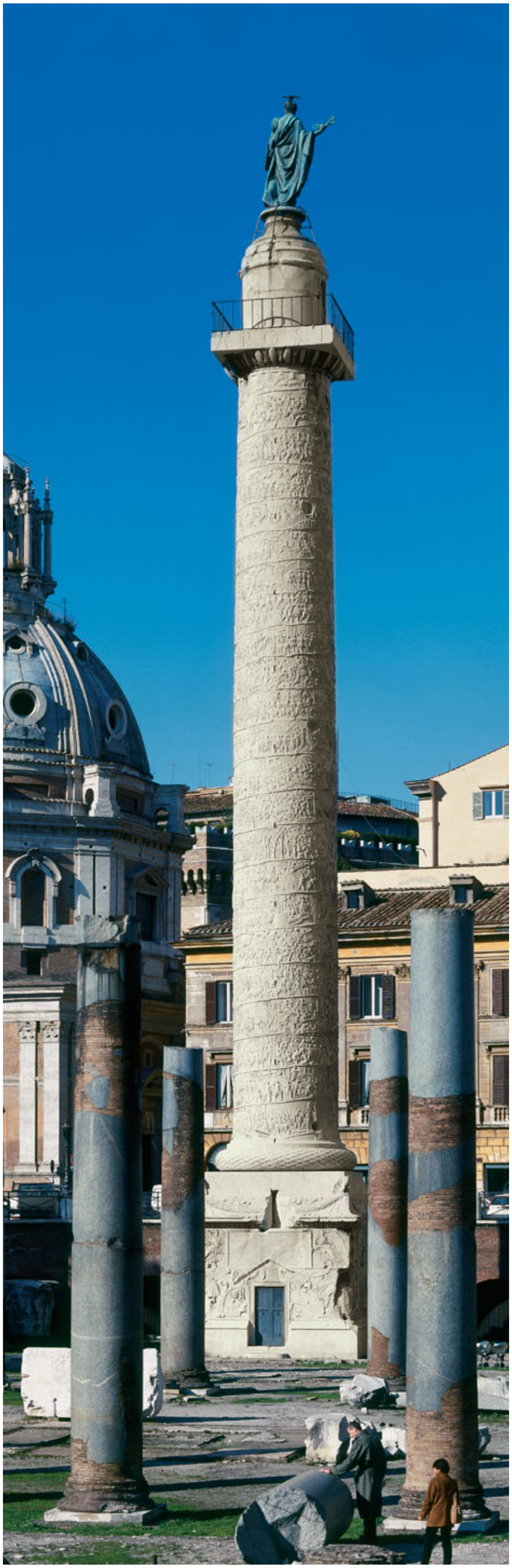
During the site preparation for Trajan's forum, part of a commercial district had to be razed and excavated. To make up for the loss, Trajan ordered the construction of a handsome public market (**FIGS. 6–45, 6–46**). The market, comparable in size to a large modern shopping mall, had more than 150 individual shops on several levels and included a large groin-vaulted main hall. In compliance with a building code that was put into effect after a disastrous fire in 64 CE, the market, like most Roman buildings of the time, was constructed of concrete (see "Concrete," page 194) faced with brick, with only occasional detailing in stone and wood.



6–46 • MAIN HALL, TRAJAN'S MARKET
Rome. 100–112 CE.

Behind the Basilica Ulpia stood twin libraries built to house the emperor's collections of Latin and Greek manuscripts. These buildings flanked an open court, the location of the great spiral column that became Trajan's tomb when Hadrian placed a golden urn containing his predecessor's ashes in its base. The column commemorated Trajan's victory over the Dacians and was erected either c. 113 CE, at about the same time as the Basilica Ulpia, or by Hadrian after Trajan's death in 117 CE.

THE COLUMN OF TRAJAN The relief decoration on the **COLUMN OF TRAJAN** spirals upward in a band that would stretch almost 625 feet if laid out straight. Like a giant, unfurled version of the scrolls housed in the libraries next to it, the column presents a continuous pictorial narrative of the Dacian campaigns of 102–103 and 105–106 CE (**FIG. 6–47**). The remarkable sculpture includes more than 2,500 individual figures linked by landscape and architecture, and punctuated by the recurring figure of Trajan. The narrative band slowly expands from about 3 feet in height at the bottom, near the viewer, to 4 feet at the top of the column, where it is farther from view. The natural and architectural elements in the scenes have been kept small so the important figures can occupy as much space as possible.



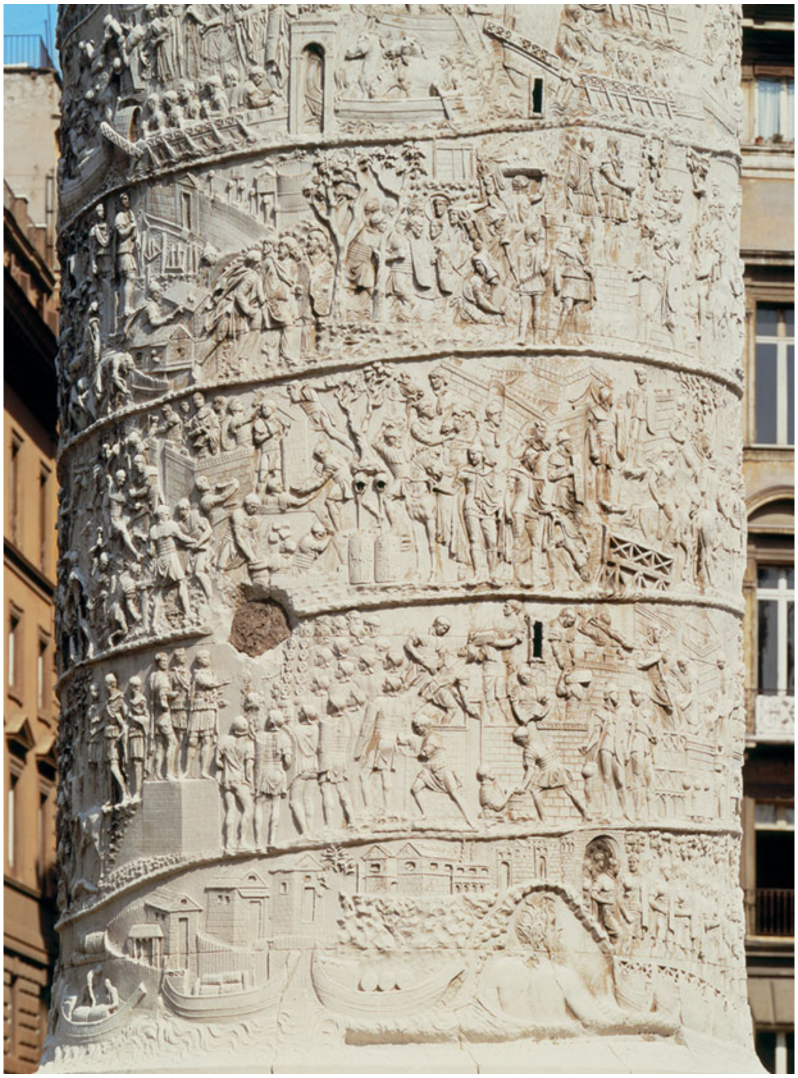
6–47 • COLUMN OF TRAJAN

Rome. 113–116 CE, or after 117 CE. Marble, overall height with base 125′ (38 m); column alone 97′8″ (29.77 m); length of relief 625′ (190.5 m).

The height of the column may have recorded the depth of the excavation required to build the Forum of Trajan. The gilded bronze statue of Trajan that once stood on the top was replaced in 1588 CE with the statue of St. Peter seen today.

View the Closer Look for the Column of Trajan on myartslab.com

The scene at the beginning of the spiral, at the bottom of the column, shows Trajan's army crossing the Danube River on a pontoon bridge to launch the first Dacian campaign of 101 CE (**FIG. 6–48**). Soldiers construct battlefield headquarters in Dacia from which the men on the frontiers will receive orders, food, and weapons. In this spectacular piece of imperial ideology or propaganda, Trajan is portrayed as a strong, stable, and efficient commander of a well-run army, and his barbarian enemies are shown as worthy opponents of Rome.



6–48 • ROMANS CROSSING THE DANUBE AND BUILDING A FORT

Detail of the lowest part of the Column of Trajan. 113–116 CE, or after 117 CE. Marble, height of the spiral band approx. 36″ (91 cm).

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE | Concrete

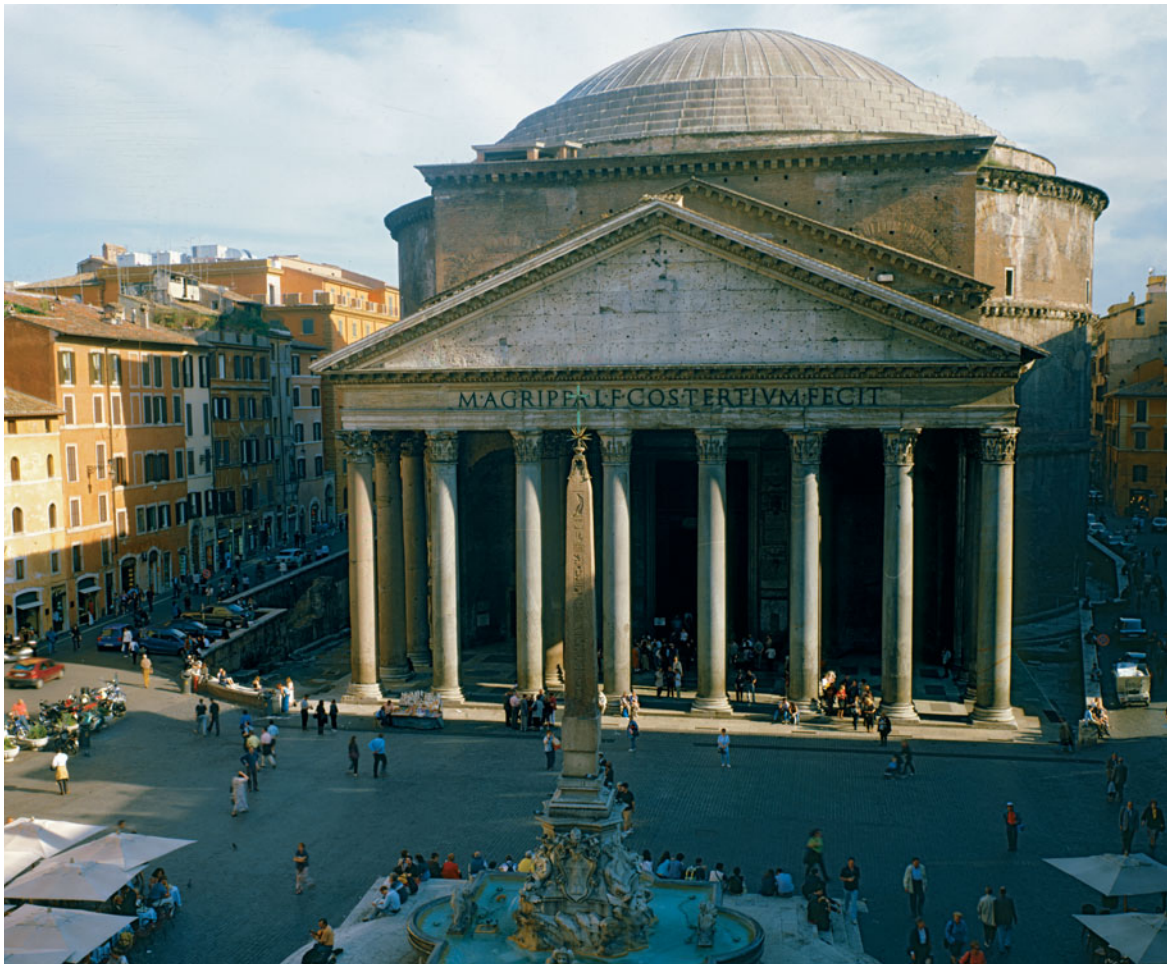
The Romans were pragmatic builders, and their practicality extended from recognizing and exploiting undeveloped potential in construction methods and physical materials to organizing large-scale building works. Their exploitation of the arch and the vault is typical of their adapt-and-improve approach (see "The Roman Arch," page 170, and "Roman Vaulting," page 187). But their innovative use of concrete, beginning in the first century BCE, was a technological breakthrough of the greatest importance in the history of architecture.

In contrast to stone—which was expensive and difficult to quarry and transport—the components of concrete were cheap, relatively light, and easily transported. Building stone structures required highly skilled masons, but a large, semiskilled workforce directed by a few experienced supervisors could construct brick-faced concrete buildings.

Roman concrete consisted of powdered lime, a volcanic sand called *pozzolana*, and various types of rubble, such as small rocks and broken pottery. Mixing these materials in water caused a chemical reaction that blended them, and they hardened as they dried into a strong, solid mass. At first, concrete was used mainly for poured foundations, but with technical advances it became indispensable for the construction of walls, arches, and vaults for ever-larger buildings, such as the Flavian Amphitheater (see FIG. 6–38) and the Markets of Trajan (see FIG. 6–46). In the earliest concrete wall construction, workers filled a framework of rough stones with concrete. Soon they developed a technique known as *opus reticulatum*, in which the framework is a diagonal web of smallish bricks set in a cross pattern. Concrete-based construction freed the Romans from the limits of right-angle forms and comparatively short spans. With this new freedom, Roman builders pushed the established limits of architecture, creating some very large and highly original spaces by pouring concrete over wooden frameworks to mold it into complex curving shapes.

Concrete's one weakness was that it absorbed moisture and would eventually deteriorate if unprotected, so builders covered exposed surfaces with a veneer, or facing, of finer materials—such as marble, stone, stucco, or painted plaster—to protect it. An essential difference between Greek and Roman architecture is that Greek builders reveal the building material itself and accept the design limitations of post-and-lintel construction, whereas Roman buildings expose only an externally applied surface covering. The sophisticated structural underpinnings that allow huge spaces molded by three-dimensional curves are set behind them, hidden from view.

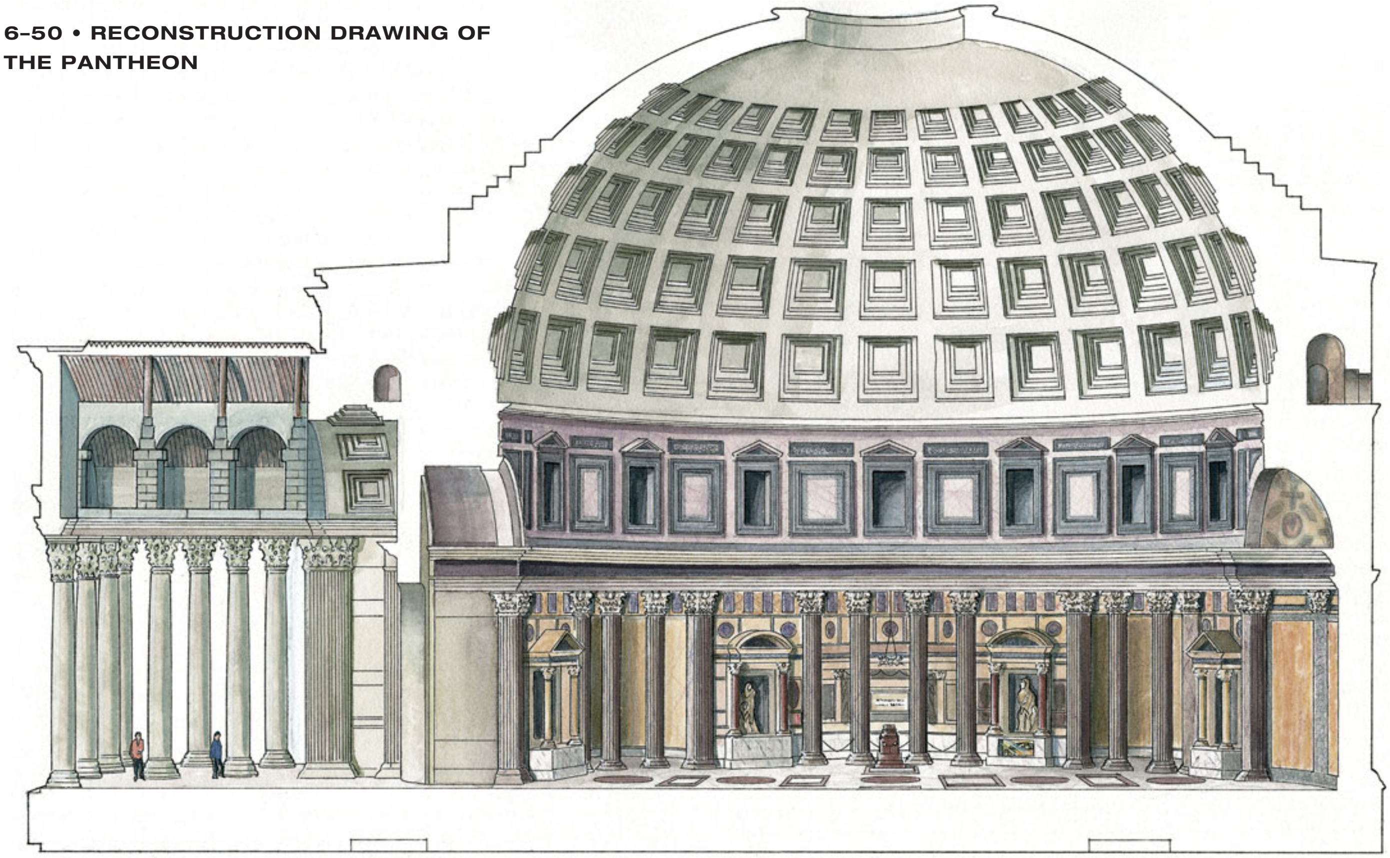
Watch an architectural simulation about the Roman use of concrete on myartslab.com

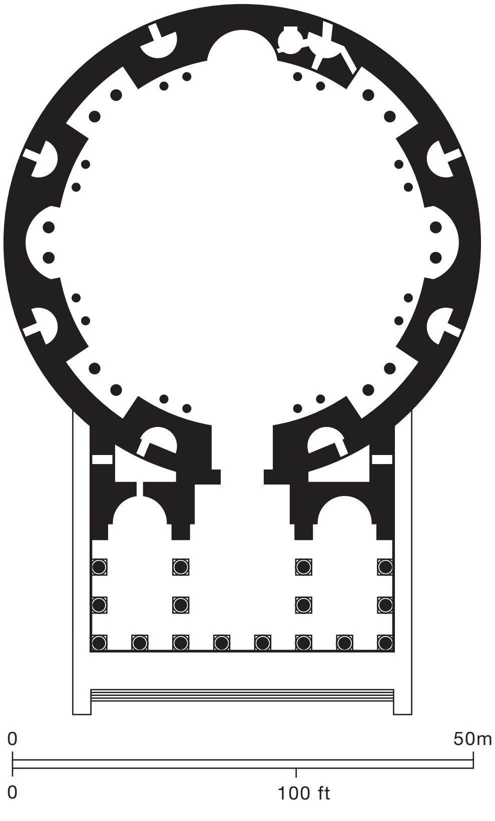


6–49 • PANTHEON
Rome. c. 110–128 CE.

Today a huge fountain dominates the square in front of the Pantheon. Built in 1578 by Giacomo della Porta, it now supports an Egyptian obelisk placed there in 1711 by Pope Clement XI.

6–50 • RECONSTRUCTION DRAWING OF THE PANTHEON

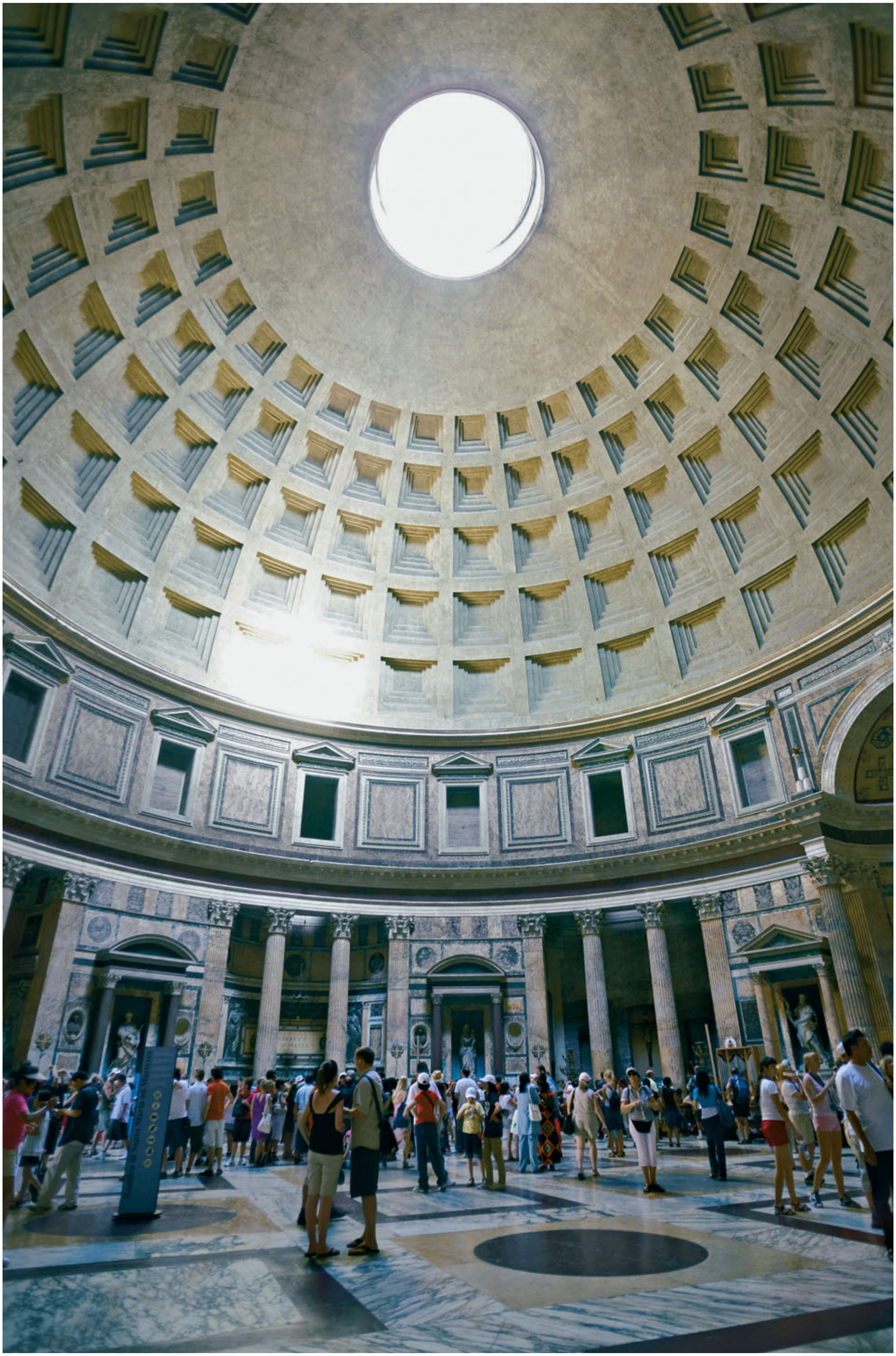




6–51 • PLAN OF THE PANTHEON

THE PANTHEON Perhaps the most remarkable ancient building surviving in Rome—and one of the marvels of world architecture in any age—is a temple to Mars, Venus, and the divine Julius Caesar known as the **PANTHEON** (**FIG. 6–49**). Although this magnificent monument was designed and constructed during the reigns of emperors Trajan and Hadrian, the long inscription on the architrave states that it was built by "Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, who was consul three times." Agrippa, the son-in-law and valued advisor of Augustus, sponsored a building on this site in 27–25 BCE. After a fire in 80 CE, Domitian either restored the Pantheon or built a new temple, which burned again after being struck by lightning in 110 CE. Although there has been a strong scholarly consensus that it was Hadrian who reconstructed the building in its current state in 118–128 CE, a recent study of the brick stamps has argued convincingly that the Pantheon was begun soon after 110 under Trajan, but only completed during the reign of his successor, Hadrian. This spectacular and influential design may represent another work of Apollodorus of Damascus.

The current setting of the temple gives little suggestion of its original appearance. Centuries of dirt and street construction hide its podium and stairs. Attachment holes in the pediment indicate the placement of bronze sculpture, perhaps an eagle within a wreath, the imperial Jupiter. Today we can see the sides of the rotunda flanking the entrance porch, but when the Pantheon was constructed, the façade of this porch—resembling the façades of typical, rectangular temples—was literally all viewers could see of the building. Since their approach was controlled by an enclosed courtyard (see **FIG. 6–42**), the actual circular shape of the Pantheon was concealed. Viewers were therefore surprised to pass through the rectilinear and restricted aisles of the portico and the huge main door to encounter the gaping space of the giant **rotunda** (circular room) surmounted by a vast, bowl-shaped dome, 143 feet in diameter and 143 feet from the floor at its summit (**FIGS. 6–50, 6–51**). Even without the controlled



6–52 • DOME OF THE PANTHEON

With light from the oculus on its coffered ceiling. c. 110–128 CE. Brick, concrete, marble veneer, diameter of dome 143′ (43.5 m).

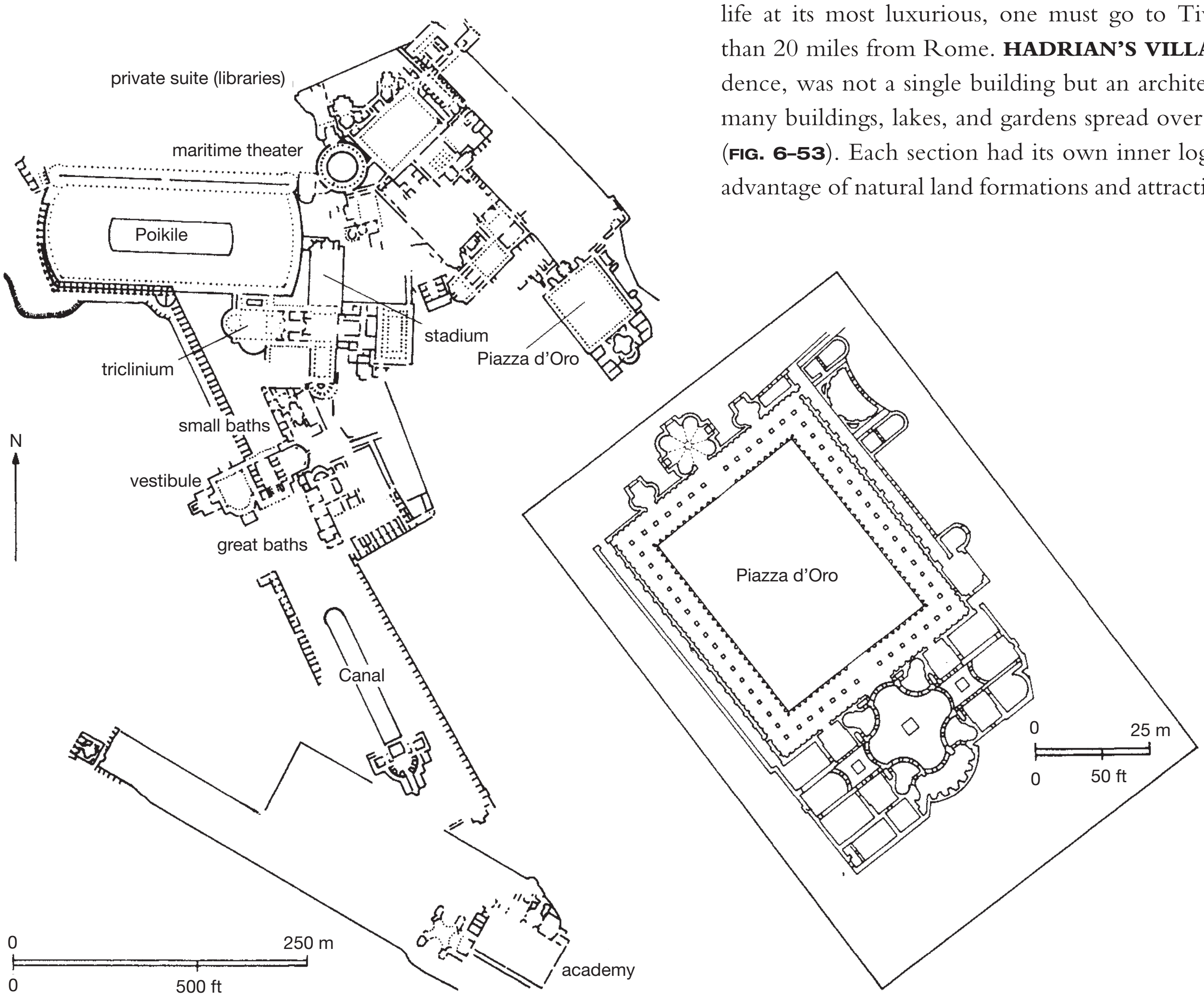
Explore the architectural panoramas of the Pantheon on myartslab.com

courtyard approach, encountering this glorious space today is still an overwhelming experience—for many of us, one that is repeated on successive visits to the rotunda.

Standing at the center of this hemispherical temple (**FIG. 6–52**), the visitor feels isolated from the outside world and intensely aware of the shape and tangibility of the luminous space itself. Our eyes are drawn upward over the patterns made by the sunken panels, or **coffers**, in the dome's ceiling to the light entering the 29-foot-wide oculus, or round central opening, which illuminates a brilliant circle against the surface of the dome. This disk of light moves around this microcosm throughout the day like a sun. Clouds can be seen traveling across the opening on some days; on others, rain falls in and then drains off through conduits on the floor planned by the original engineer. Occasionally a bird flies in.

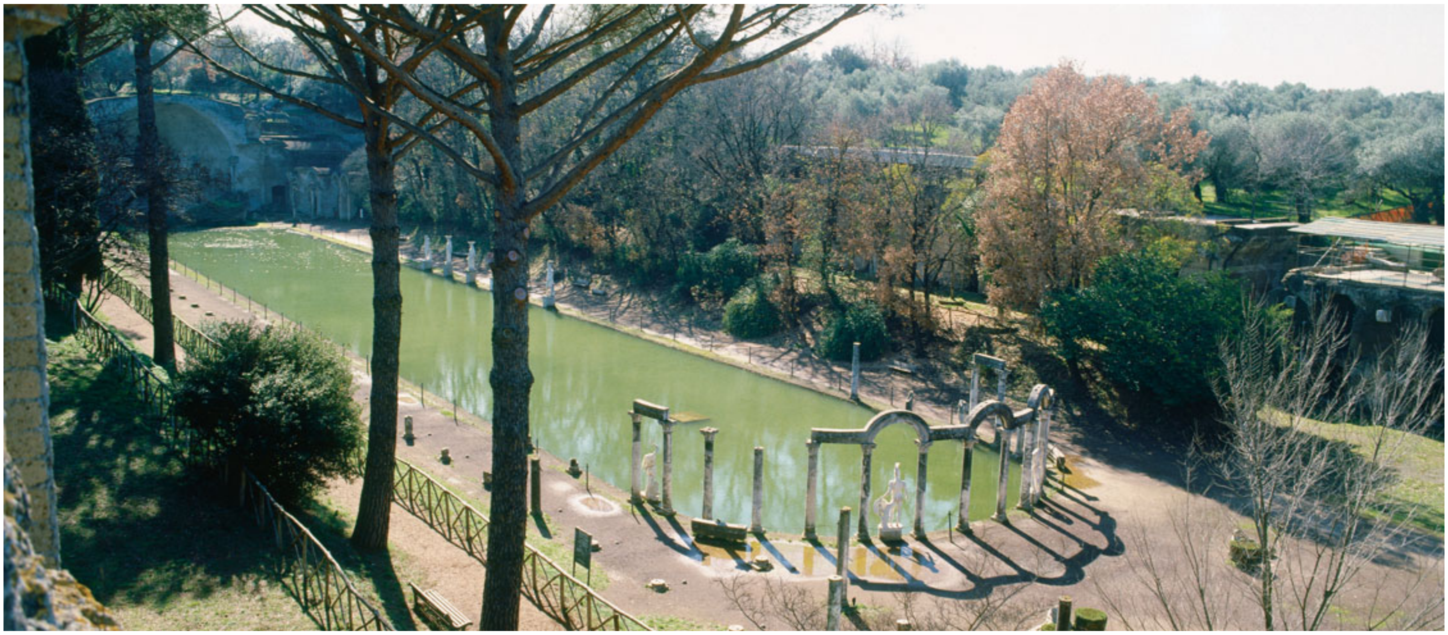
The simple shape of the Pantheon's dome belies its sophisticated design and engineering (see FIG. 6–52). Marble veneer and two tiers of richly colored architectural detail conceal the internal brick arches and concrete structure of the 20-foot-thick walls of the rotunda. More than half of the original decoration—a wealth of columns, pilasters, and entablatures—survives. The simple repetition of square against circle, established on a large scale by juxtaposing the rectilinear portico against the circular rotunda, is found throughout the building's ornamentation. The wall is punctuated by seven **exedrae** (niches)—rectangular alternating with semicircular—that originally held statues of gods. The square, boxlike coffers inside the dome, which help lighten the weight of the masonry, may once have contained gilded bronze rosettes or stars suggesting the heavens. In 609 CE, Pope Boniface IV rededicated the Pantheon as the Christian church of St. Mary of the Martyrs, thus ensuring its survival through the Middle Ages and down to our day.

HADRIAN'S VILLA AT TIVOLI To imagine imperial Roman life at its most luxurious, one must go to Tivoli, a little more than 20 miles from Rome. **HADRIAN'S VILLA**, or country residence, was not a single building but an architectural complex of many buildings, lakes, and gardens spread over half a square mile (**FIG. 6–53**). Each section had its own inner logic, and each took advantage of natural land formations and attractive views. Hadrian

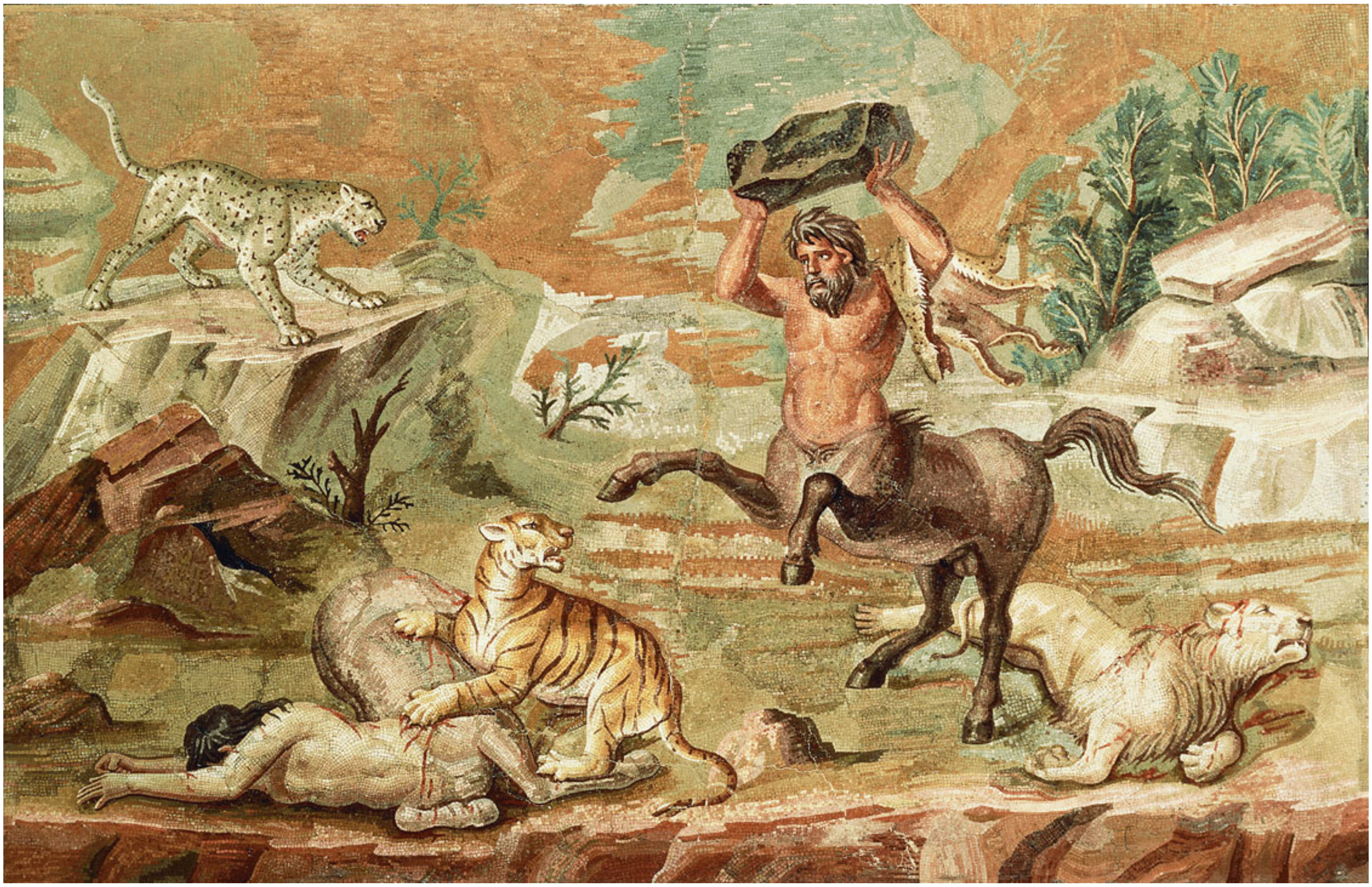


6–53 • PLAN OF HADRIAN'S VILLA

Tivoli. c. 125–135 CE.



6–54 • THE CANAL (REFLECTING POOL), HADRIAN'S VILLA
Tivoli. c. 125–135 CE.



6–55 • BATTLE OF CENTAURS AND WILD BEASTS
From Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli. c. 125 CE. Mosaic, 23″ × 36″ (58.4 × 91.4 cm). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Antikensammlung, Berlin.

This floor mosaic may be a copy of a much-admired scene of a fight between centaurs and wild animals painted by the late fifth-century BCE Greek artist Zeuxis.

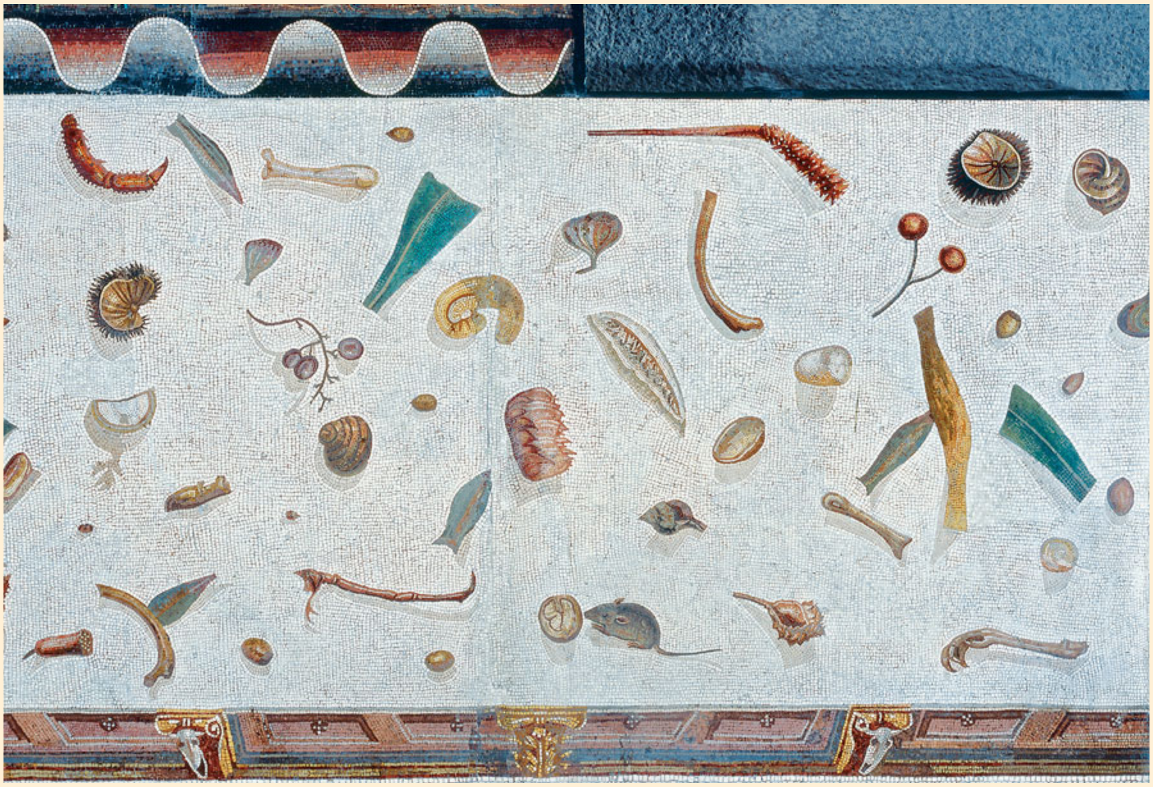
TECHNIQUE | Roman Mosaics

Mosaics were used widely in Hellenistic times and became enormously popular for decorating homes in the Roman period. Mosaic designs were created with pebbles (see FIG. 5–57), or with small, regularly shaped pieces of colored stone and marble, called *tesserae*. The stones were pressed into a kind of soft cement called grout. When the stones were firmly set, the spaces between them were also filled with grout. After the surface dried, it was cleaned and polished. Since the natural stones produced only a narrow range of colors, glass *tesserae* were also used to extend the palette as early as the third century BCE.

Mosaic production was made more efficient by the use of emblemata (the plural of *emblema*, "central design"). These small, intricate mosaic compositions were created in the artist's workshop in square or rectangular trays. They could be made in advance, carried to a work site, and inserted into a floor decorated with an easily produced geometric pattern.

Some skilled mosaicists even copied well-known paintings, often by famous Greek artists. Employing a technique in which very small *tesserae*, in a wide range of colors, were laid down in irregular, curving lines, they effectively imitated painted brushstrokes. One example is *The Unswept Floor* (**FIG. 6–56**). Herakleitos, a second-century CE Greek mosaicist living in Rome, made this copy of an original work by the renowned second-century BCE artist Sosos. Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, mentions a mosaic of an unswept floor and another of doves that Sosos made in Pergamon. (For another Roman mosaic copy of a Greek painting, see FIG. 5–56.)

A dining room would be a logical location for a floor mosaic of this theme, with table scraps re-created in meticulous detail, even to the shadows they cast, and a mouse foraging among them. Guests reclining on their banquet couches would certainly have been amused by the pictures on the floor, but they could also have shown off their knowledge of the notable Greek precedents for the mosaic beneath their feet.



6–56 • THE UNSWEPT FLOOR
Mosaic variant of a 2nd-century BCE painting by Sosos of Pergamon. 2nd century CE. Signed by Herakleitos. Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano, Rome.

instructed his architects to re-create his favorite places throughout the empire so he could pretend to enjoy the Athenian Grove of Academe, the Painted Stoa from the Athenian Agora, and buildings of the Ptolemaic capital of Alexandria in Egypt.

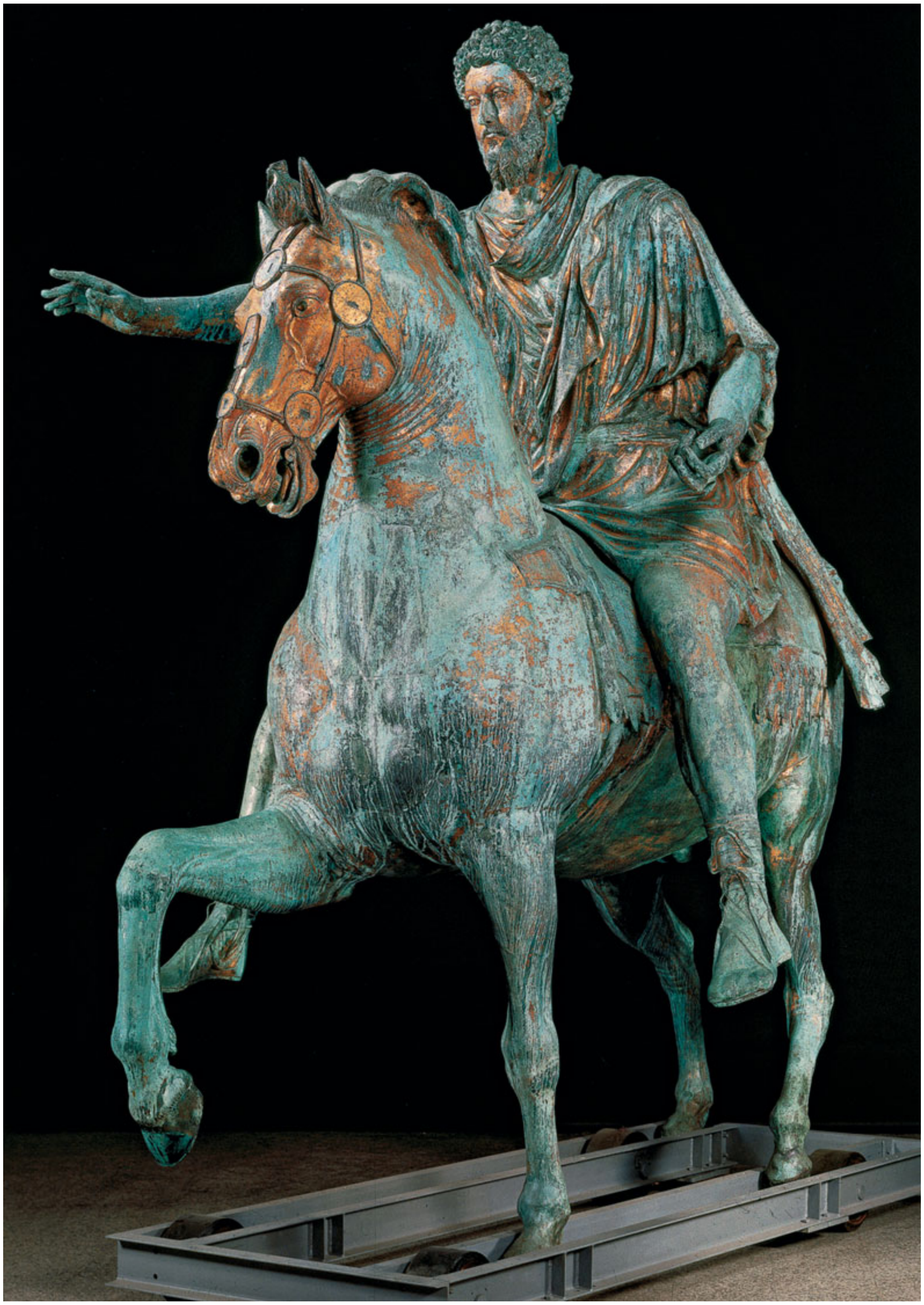
Landscapes with pools, fountains, and gardens turned the villa into a place of sensuous delight. An area with a long reflecting pool, called **THE CANAL**, was framed by a colonnade with alternating semicircular and straight entablatures (**FIG. 6–54**). Copies of famous Greek statues—sometimes even originals—filled the spaces between columns. So great was Hadrian's love of Greek sculpture that he even had the caryatids of the Erechtheion (see FIG. 5–45) replicated for his pleasure palace.

The individual buildings were not large, but they were extremely complex and imaginatively designed, exploiting fully the flexibility offered by concrete vaulted construction. Walls and floors had veneers of marble and travertine or of exquisite mosaics and paintings. A panel from one of the floor mosaics (**FIG. 6–55**) demonstrates the extraordinary artistry of Hadrian's mosaicists (see

"Roman Mosaics," page 199). In a rocky landscape with only a few bits of greenery, a desperate male centaur raises a large boulder over his head to crush a tiger that has attacked and severely wounded a female centaur. Two other felines apparently took part in the attack—the white leopard on the rocks to the left and the dead lion at the feet of the male centaur. The artist rendered the figures with three-dimensional shading, foreshortening, and a great sensitivity to a range of figure types, including human torsos and powerful animals in a variety of poses.

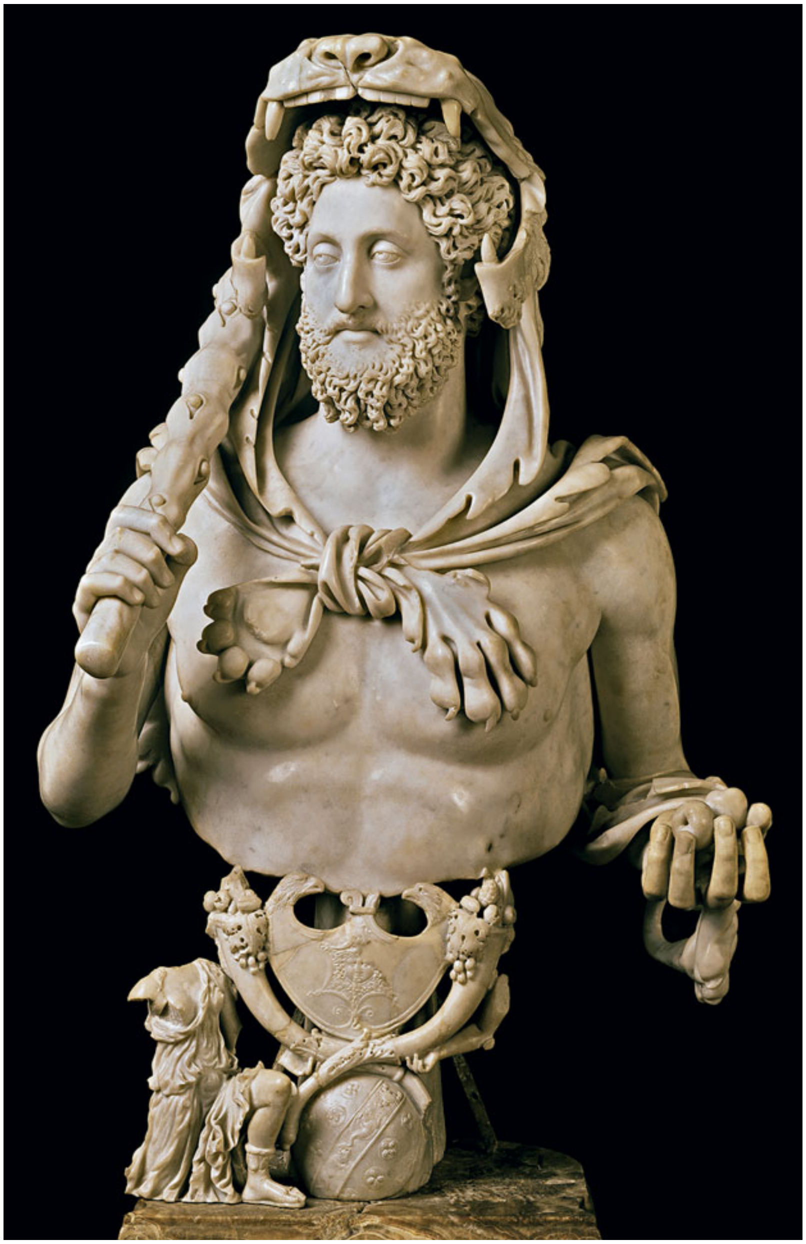
IMPERIAL PORTRAITS

Imperial portraits were objects of propaganda, proclaiming the accomplishments and pretensions of emperors. Marcus Aurelius, like Hadrian, was a successful military commander who was equally proud of his intellectual attainments. In a lucky error—or twist of fortune—a gilded-bronze equestrian statue of the emperor, dressed as a military commander in a tunic and short, heavy cloak (**FIG. 6–57**), came mistakenly to be revered during the Middle Ages as a statue of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, and



6–57 • EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF MARCUS AURELIUS
c. 176 CE. Bronze, originally gilded, height of statue 11′6″ (3.5 m). Museo Capitolino, Rome.

Between 1187 and 1538, this statue stood in the piazza fronting the palace and church of St. John Lateran in Rome. In January 1538, Pope Paul III had it moved to the Capitoline Hill, and Michelangelo made it the centerpiece of his newly redesigned Capitoline Piazza. After being removed from its base for cleaning and restoration during the 1980s, it was taken inside the Capitoline Museum to protect it from air pollution, and a copy has replaced it in the piazza.



6–58 • COMMODUS AS HERCULES
From the Esquiline Hill, Rome. c. 191–192 CE. Marble, height 46½″ (118 cm). Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome.

consequently the sculpture escaped being melted down. The raised foreleg of his horse once trampled a crouching barbarian.

Marcus Aurelius' head, with its thick, curly hair and full beard (a fashion initiated by Hadrian), resembles traditional "philosopher" portraits from the Greek world. The emperor wears no armor and carries no weapons; like Egyptian kings, he conquers effortlessly by divine will. And like his illustrious predecessor Augustus, he reaches out to those around him in a rhetorical gesture of address. It is difficult to create an equestrian portrait in which the rider stands out as the dominant figure without making the horse look too small. The sculptor of this statue found a balance acceptable to viewers of the time and, in doing so, created a model for later artists.

Marcus Aurelius was succeeded as emperor by his son Commodus, a man without political skill, administrative competence, or intellectual distinction. During his unfortunate reign (180–192 CE), he devoted himself to luxury and frivolous pursuits, claiming at various times to be the reincarnation of Hercules and the incarnation of the god Jupiter. When he proposed to assume the consulship dressed and armed as a gladiator, his associates, including his mistress, arranged to have him strangled in his bath by a wrestling partner. In a spectacular marble bust, the emperor poses as **HERCULES (FIG. 6–58)**, adorned with references to the hero's legendary labors: Hercules' club, the skin and head of the Nemean lion, and the golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides. Commodus' likeness emphasizes his family resemblance to his more illustrious and powerful father (see FIG. 6–57), but it also captures his vanity, through the grand pretensions of his costume and the Classical associations of his body type. The sculptor's sensitive modeling and expert drillwork exploit the play of light and shadow on the figure to bring out the textures of the hair, beard, facial features, and drapery, and to capture the illusion of life and movement.

FUNERARY SCULPTURE During the second and third centuries, a shift from cremation to inhumation created a growing demand for sarcophagi in which to bury the bodies of the deceased. Wealthy Romans commissioned thousands of massive and elaborate marble sarcophagi, encrusted with sculptural relief, created in large production workshops throughout the Roman Empire.

In 1885, nine particularly impressive sarcophagi were discovered in private underground burial chambers built for use by a powerful, aristocratic Roman family—the Calpurnii Pisones. One of these sarcophagi, from c. 190 CE, portrays the *Indian Triumph of Dionysus* (see "A Closer Look," page 202). This is a popular theme in late second-century CE sarcophagi, but here the carved relief is of especially high quality—complex but highly legible at the same time. The mythological composition owes a debt to imperial ceremony: Dionysus, at far left in a chariot, receives from a personification of Victory standing behind him a laurel crown, identical to the headdress worn by Roman emperors during triumphal processions. Also derived from state ceremony is the display of booty and captives carried by the elephants at the center of the composition. But religion, rather than statecraft, is the real theme here. The set of sarcophagi to which this belongs proclaims the family's adherence to a mystery cult of Dionysus that focused on themes of decay and renewal, death and rebirth. The triumph of the deceased over death is the central message here, not one particular episode in the life of Dionysus himself.

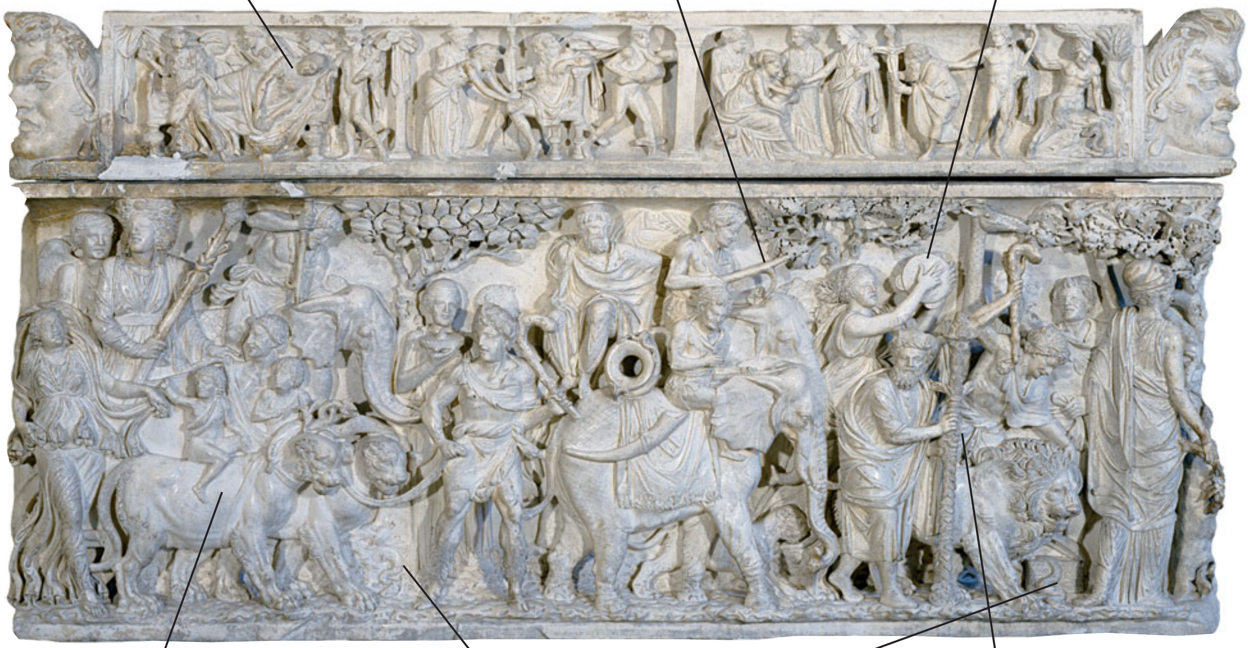
A CLOSER LOOK | Sarcophagus with the Indian Triumph of Dionysus

c. 190 CE. Marble, 47½″ × 92½″ × 35¹³⁄₁₆″ (120.7 × 234.9 × 90.96 cm).
Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

Semele, mortal mother of the god Dionysus, gives birth prematurely and then dies. Once grown, Dionysus would travel to the underworld and bring his mother to paradise. Semele's death therefore suggests the promise of eternal life through her son.

These hooked sticks are identical to the *ankusha* still used by *mahouts* (elephant drivers) in India today.

As part of their worship, followers of Dionysiac mystery religions re-created the triumphant return of the god from India by parading in the streets after dark. A dancing maenad beats her tambourine here, suggesting the sounds and movements that would accompany such ritual re-enactments.



The presence of exotic animals such as elephants, a lion, a giraffe, and panthers, identifies this scene as Dionysus' triumphant return from India.

Snakes were not only used in the rites of Dionysiac mystery religions; they were powerful symbols of rebirth and phallic fertility, making them especially appropriate in the context of a sarcophagus. Three snakes appear along the ground-line of the sculptural frieze.

The aged god Silenus leans on a *thyrsos* staff, composed of a giant fennel wound with ivy and topped with a pinecone, symbolizing fertility. Dionysus, with whom such staffs were associated, also carries one here as his triumphal scepter.

View the Closer Look for the sarcophagus with the Indian Triumph of Dionysus on myartslab.com

THE LATE EMPIRE, THIRD AND FOURTH CENTURIES CE

The comfortable life suggested by the wall paintings in Roman houses and villas was, within a century, to be challenged by hard times. The reign of Commodus marked the beginning of a period of political and economic decline. Barbarian groups had already begun moving into the empire in the time of Marcus Aurelius. Now they pressed on Rome's frontiers. Many crossed the borders and settled within them, disrupting provincial governments. As perceived threats spread throughout the empire, imperial rule became increasingly authoritarian. Eventually the army controlled the government, and the Imperial Guards set up and deposed rulers almost at will, often selecting candidates from among poorly educated, power-hungry provincial leaders in their own ranks.

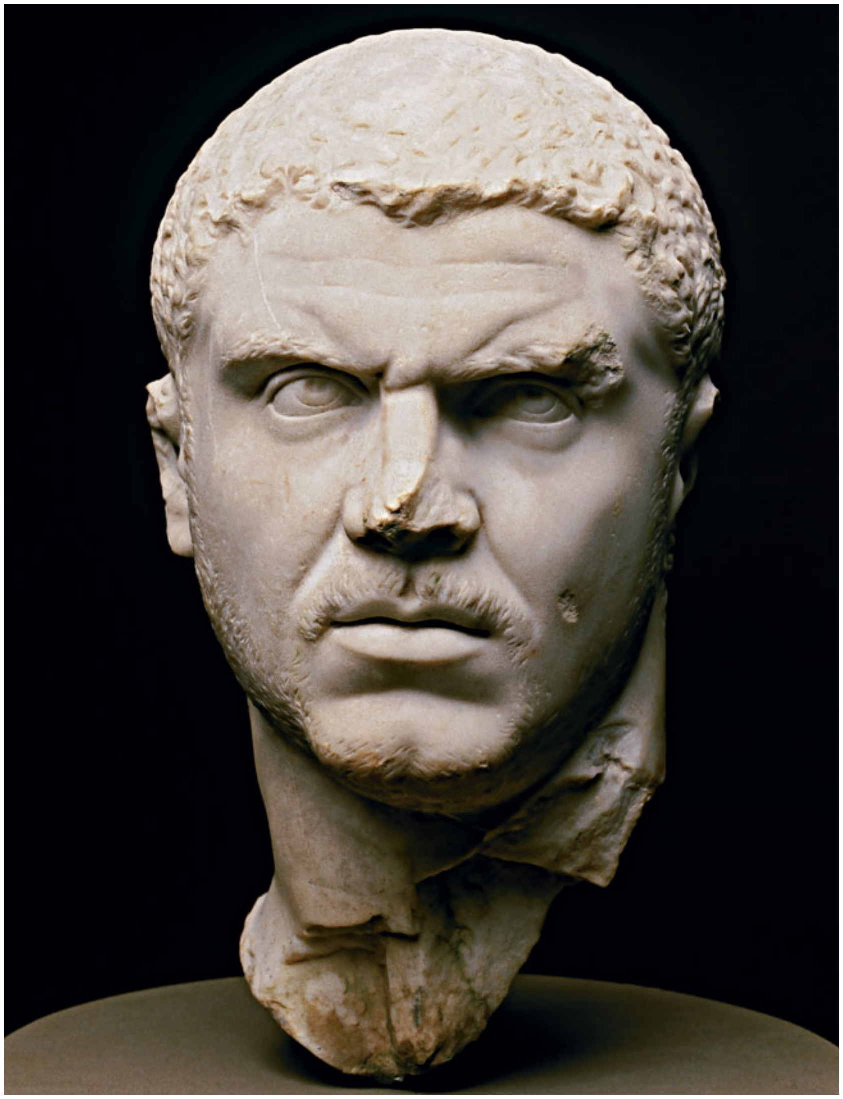
THE SEVERAN DYNASTY

Despite the pressures brought by political and economic change, the arts continued to flourish under the Severan emperors (193–235 CE) who succeeded Commodus. Septimius Severus (r. 193–211 CE), who was born in Africa, and his Syrian wife, Julia Domna, restored public buildings, commissioned official portraits, and revitalized the old cattle market in Rome into a well-planned center of bustling commerce. Their sons, Geta and Caracalla, succeeded Septimius Severus as co-emperors in 211 CE, but Caracalla murdered Geta in 212 CE and then ruled alone until he in turn was murdered in 217 CE.

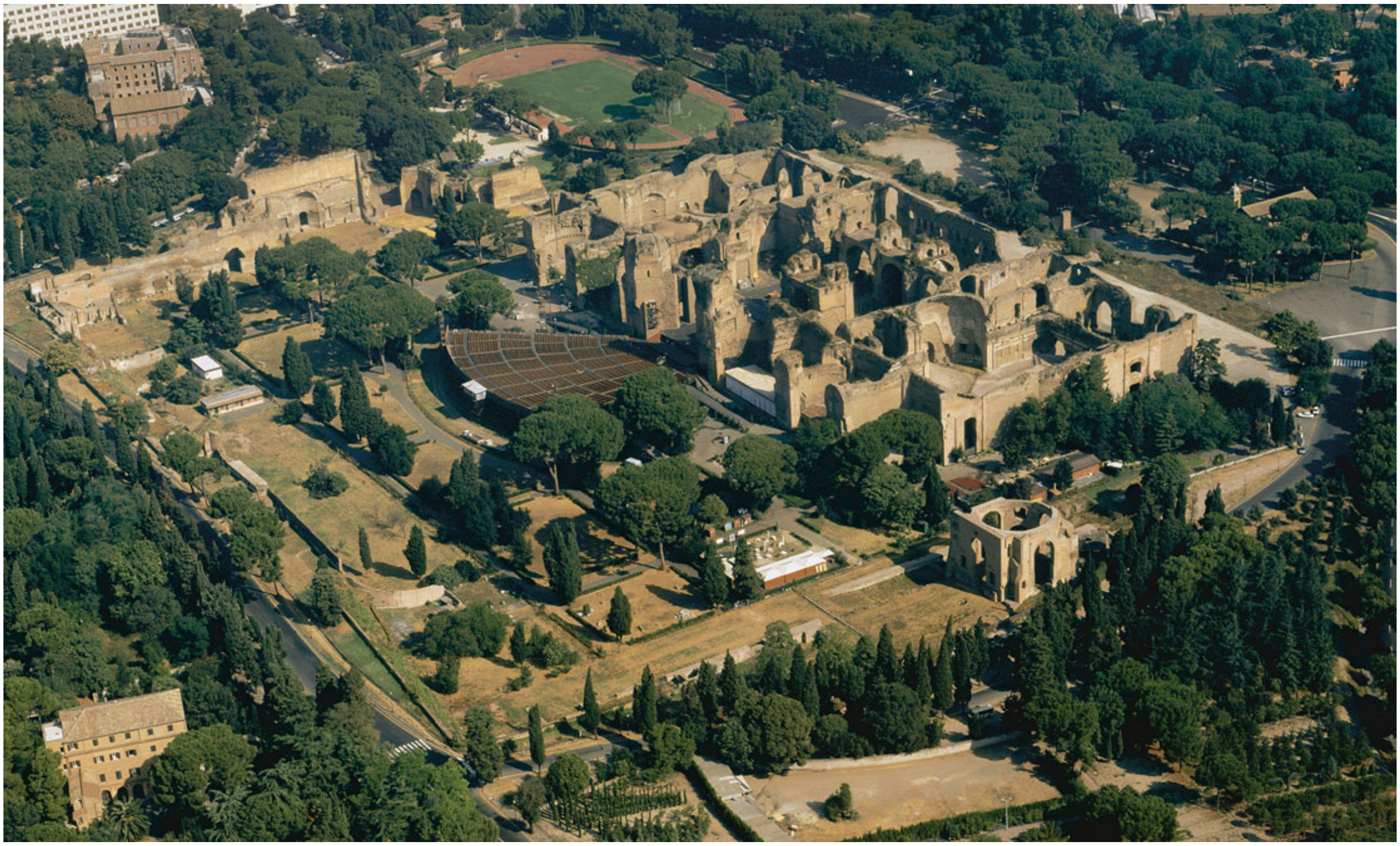
PORTRAITS OF CARACALLA The Emperor Caracalla appears in his portraits as a fierce and courageous ruler, capable of confronting Rome's enemies and safeguarding the security of the Roman Empire. In the example shown here (**FIG. 6–59**), the sculptor has enhanced the intensity of the emperor's expression by producing strong contrasts of light and dark with careful chiseling and drillwork. Even the marble eyes have been drilled and engraved to catch the light in a way that makes them dominate his expression. The contrast between this style and that of the portraits of Augustus is a telling reflection of the changing character of imperial rule. Augustus envisioned himself as the suave initiator of a Golden Age of peace and prosperity; Caracalla presents himself as a no-nonsense ruler of iron-fisted determination, with a militaristic, close-cropped haircut and a glare of fierce intensity.

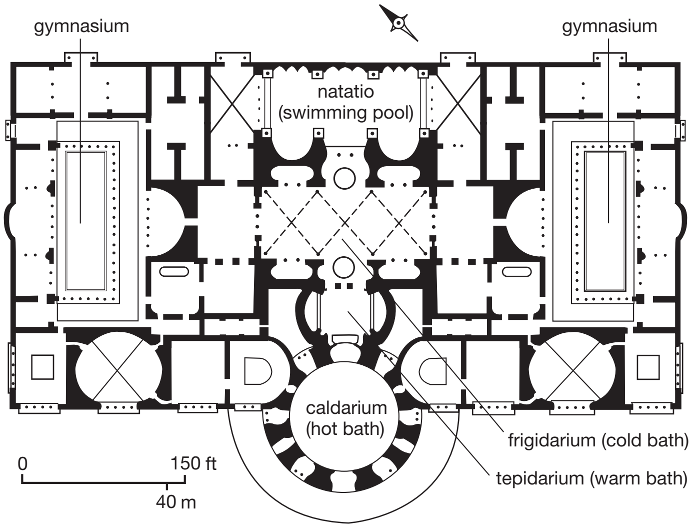
THE BATHS OF CARACALLA The year before his death in 211 CE, Septimius Severus had begun a popular public-works project: the construction of magnificent new public baths on the southeast side of Rome as a new recreational and educational center. Caracalla completed and inaugurated the baths today known by his name, in 216–217 CE. The impressive brick and concrete structure was hidden under a sheath of colorful marble and mosaic. The builders used soaring groin and barrel vaults, which allow the maximum space with the fewest possible supports. The groin vaults also made possible large windows in every bay. Windows were important, since the baths depended on natural light and could only be open during daylight hours.

The **BATHS OF CARACALLA** (**FIG. 6–60**) were laid out on a strictly symmetrical plan. The bathing facilities were grouped in the center of the main building to make efficient use of the below-ground furnaces that heated them and to allow bathers to move comfortably from hot to cold pools and then finish with a swim. Many other facilities—exercise rooms, shops, latrines, and dressing rooms—were housed on each side of the bathing block. The bath buildings alone covered 5 acres. The entire complex, which included gardens, a stadium, libraries, a painting gallery, auditoriums, and huge water reservoirs, covered an area of 50 acres.



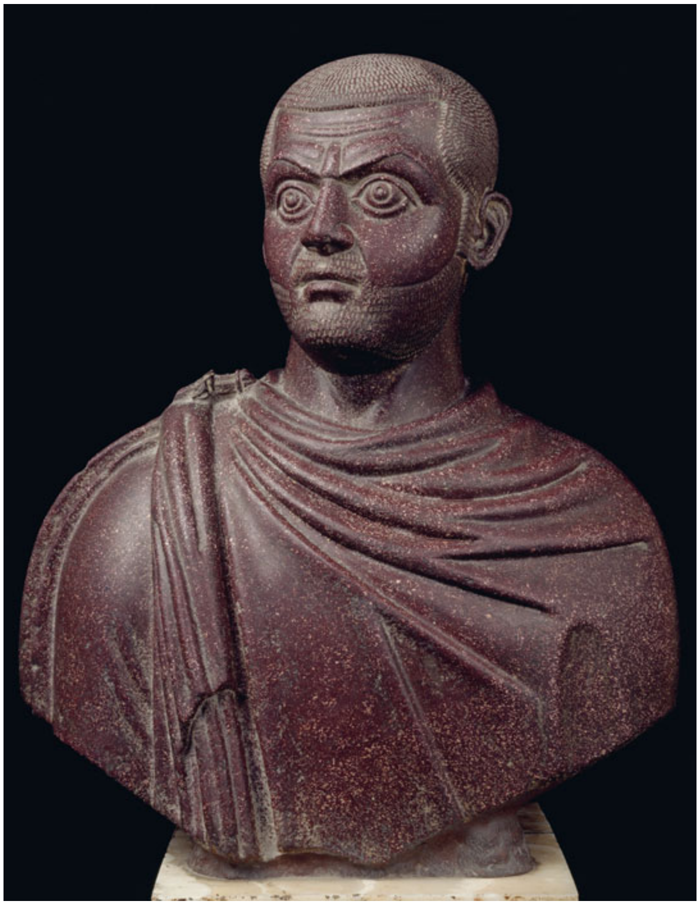
6–59 • CARACALLA
Early 3rd century CE. Marble, height 14½″ (36.2 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Samuel D. Lee Fund, 1940. (40.11.1A)




gymnasium
gymnasium
natatio
(swimming pool)
caldarium
(hot bath)
frigidarium (cold bath)
tepidarium (warm bath)
0
150 ft
40 m

6–60 • AERIAL VIEW (A) AND PLAN (B) OF THE BATHS OF CARACALLA
Rome. c. 211–217 CE.

Explore the architectural panoramas of the Baths of Caracalla on myartslab.com



6–61 • PORTRAIT OF A TETRARCH (GALERIUS?)
Early 4th century CE. Porphyry, 2′5½″ (65 cm). Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

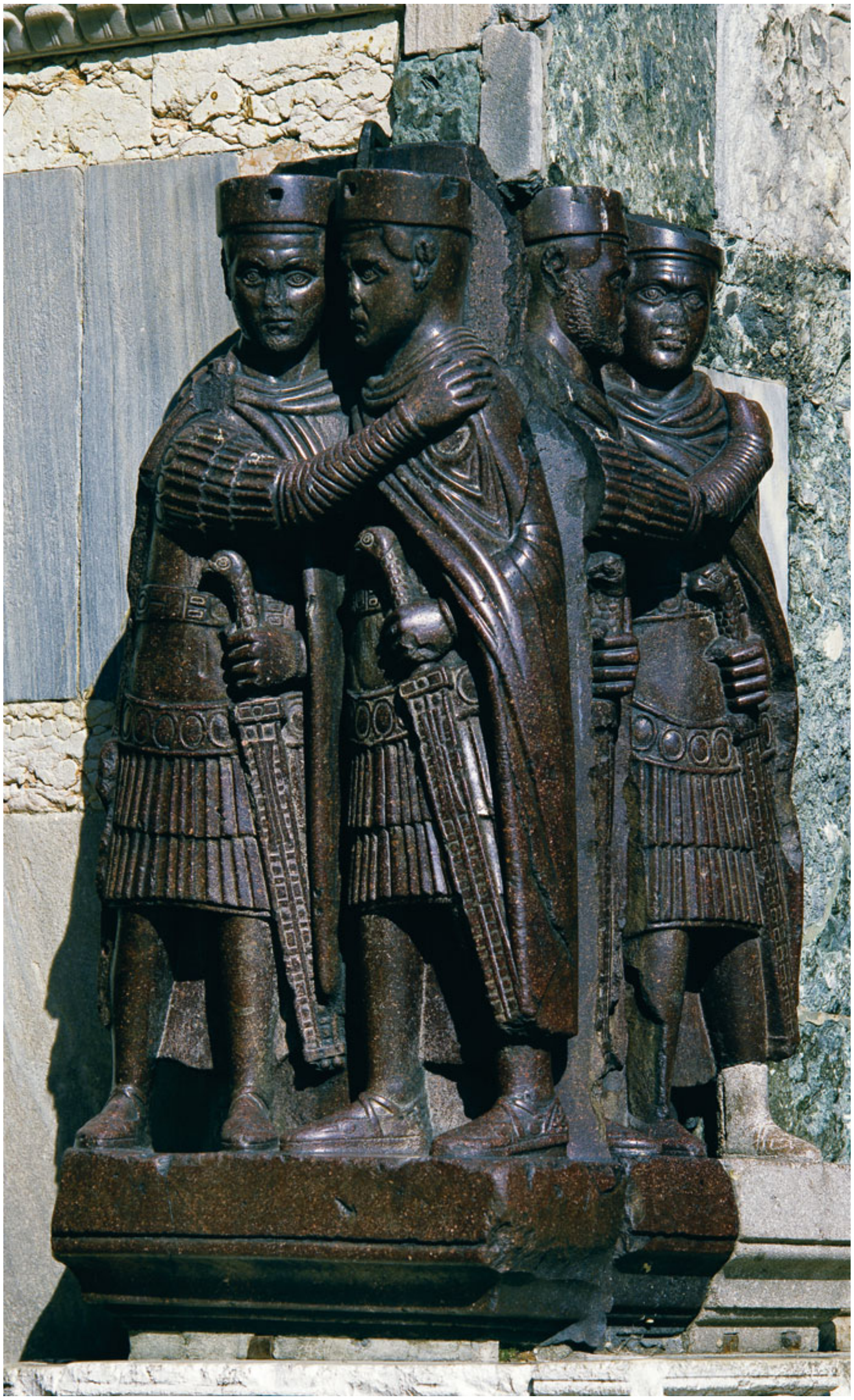
THE SOLDIER EMPERORS

Following the assassination of the last Severan emperor by one of his military commanders in 235 CE, Rome was plunged into a period of anarchy that lasted for 50 years. A series of soldier emperors attempted to rule the empire, but real order was only restored by Diocletian (r. 284–305 CE), also a military commander. This brilliant politician and general reversed the empire's declining fortunes, but he also initiated an increasingly autocratic form of rule, and the social structure of the empire became increasingly rigid.

To divide up the task of defending and administering the Roman world and to assure an orderly succession, in 286 CE Diocletian divided the empire in two parts. According to his plan, he would rule in the East with the title of "Augustus," while another Augustus, Maximian, would rule in the West. Then, in 293 CE, he devised a form of government called a tetrarchy, or "rule of four," in which each Augustus designated a subordinate and heir, who held the title of "Caesar." And the Roman Empire, now divided into four quadrants, would be ruled by four individuals.

TETRARCHIC PORTRAITURE Diocletian's political restructuring is paralleled by the introduction of a radically new, hard style of geometricized abstraction, especially notable in portraits of the tetrarchs themselves. A powerful bust of a tetrarch, startlingly alert with searing eyes (**FIG. 6–61**), embodies this stylistic shift toward the antithesis of the suave Classicism seen in the portrait of Commodus as Hercules (see FIG. 6–58). There is no clear sense of likeness. Who this individual is seems to be less significant than the powerful position he holds. Some art historians have interpreted this change in style as a conscious embodiment of Diocletian's new concept of government, while others have pointed to parallels with the provincial art of Diocletian's Dalmatian homeland or with the Neoplatonic aesthetics of idealized abstraction promoted by Plotinus, a third-century CE philosopher who was widely read in the late Roman world. In any event, these riveting works represent not a degeneration of the Classical tradition but its conscious replacement by a different aesthetic viewpoint—militaristic, severe, and abstract rather than suave, slick, and classicizing.

This new mode is famously represented by an actual sculptural group of **THE TETRARCHS** (**FIG. 6–62**). The four figures are nearly identical, except that the senior Augusti have beards while

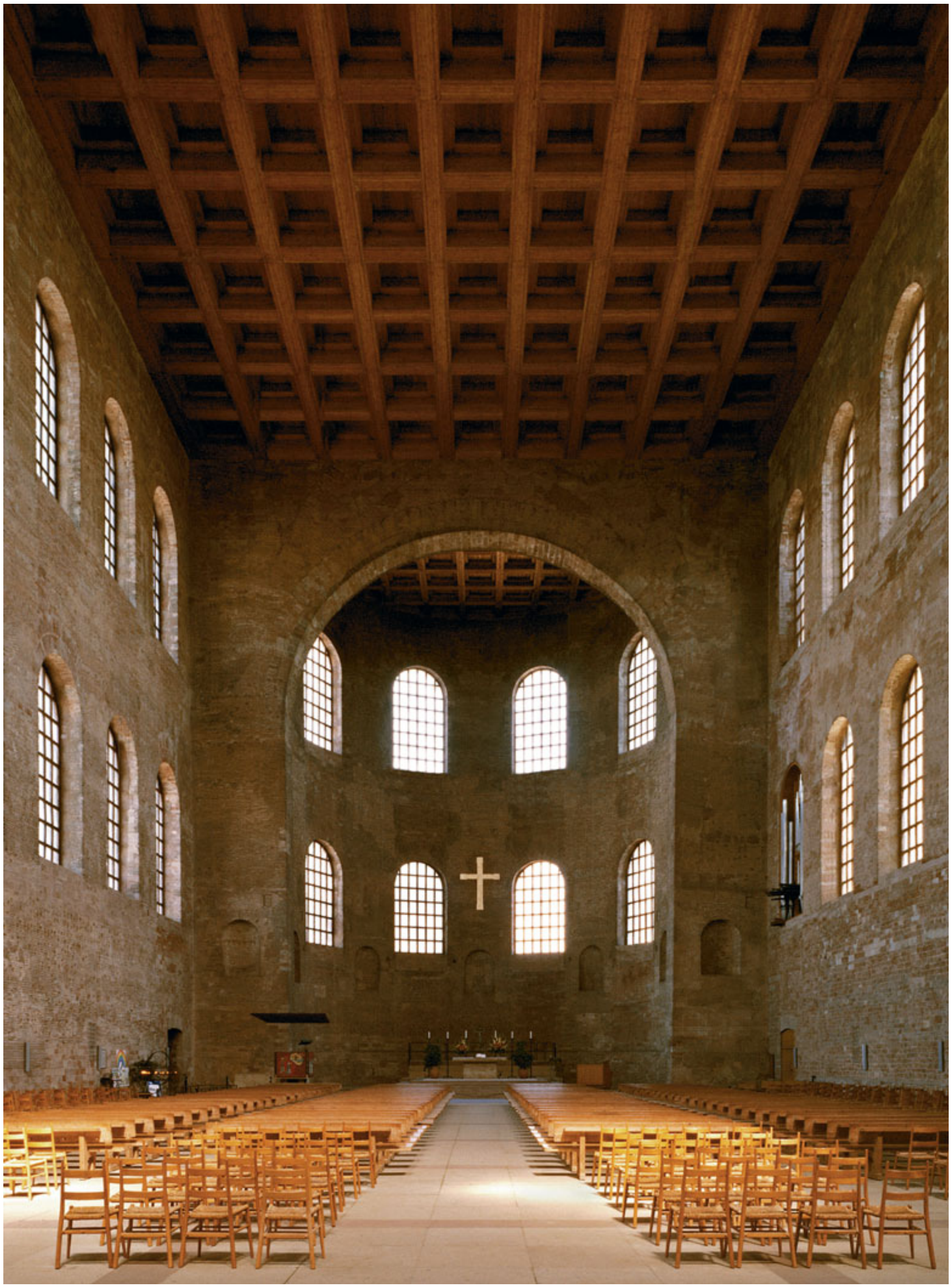


6–62 • THE TETRARCHS
c. 300 CE. Porphyry, height of figures 51″ (129 cm). Installed at the corner of the façade of the Cathedral of St. Mark, Venice.

This particular sculpture may have been made in Egypt and moved to Constantinople after 330 CE. Christian crusaders who looted Constantinople in 1204 CE took the statue to Venice and installed it at the Cathedral of St. Mark, where it is today.

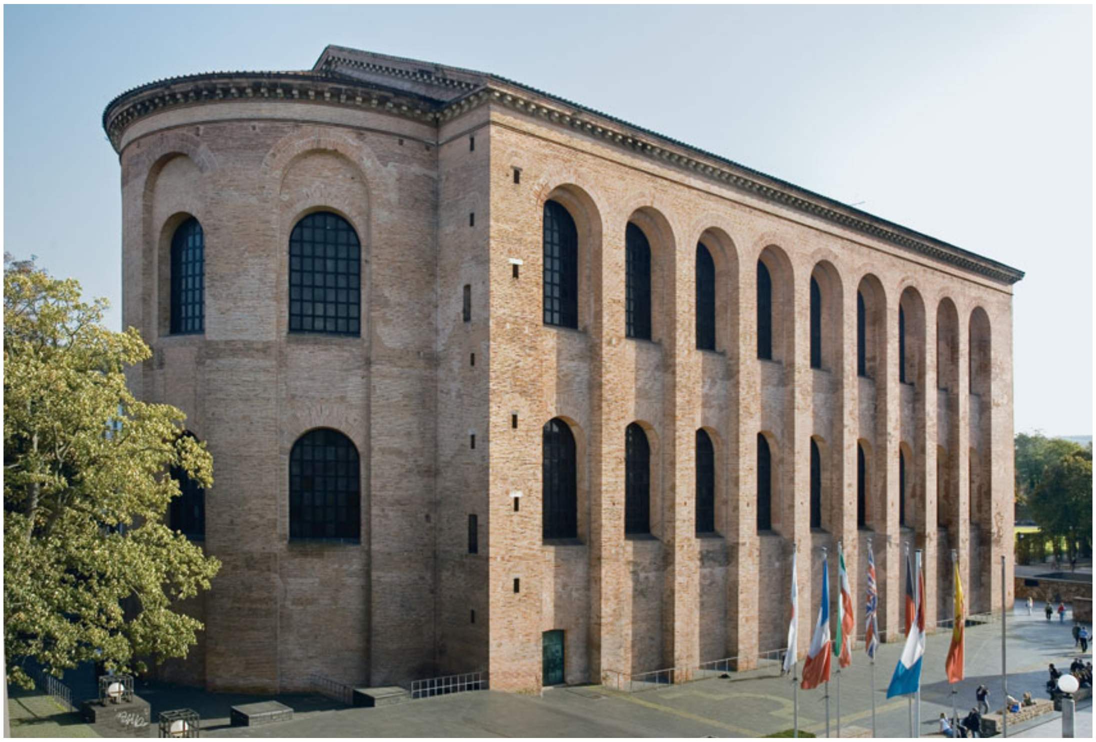
their juniors, the Caesars, are clean-shaven. Dressed in military garb and clasping swords at their sides, they embrace each other in a show of imperial unity, proclaiming an alliance rooted in strength and vigilance. The sculpture is made of porphyry, an extremely hard, purple stone from Egypt that was reserved for imperial use (see FIG. 6–61).

THE BASILICA AT TRIER The tetrarchs ruled the empire from administrative headquarters in Milan (Italy), Trier (Germany), Thessaloniki (Greece), and Nicomedia (Turkey). Imposing architecture was created to house the government in these new capital cities. In Trier, for example, Constantius Chlorus (Caesar, 293–305; Augustus, 305–306 CE) and his son Constantine fortified the city with walls and a monumental gate that still stand. They built public amenities, such as baths, and a palace with a huge **AUDIENCE HALL**, later used as a Christian church (**FIGS. 6–63, 6–64**). This early fourth-century basilica's large size and simple plan and structure exemplify the architecture of the tetrarchs: no-nonsense, imposing buildings that would impress their subjects. The audience hall is a large rectangular building, 190 by 95 feet, with a strong directional focus given by a single apse opposite the door. Brick walls, originally stuccoed on the outside and covered with marble veneer inside, are pierced by two rows of arched windows. A flat roof, nearly 100 feet above the floor, covers both



6–63 • AUDIENCE HALL OF CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS (NOW KNOWN AS THE BASILICA)
Trier, Germany. View of the nave. Early 4th century CE. Height of room 100′ (30.5 m).

Only the left wall and apse survive from the original Roman building. The hall became part of the bishop's palace during the medieval period.



6–64 • EXTERIOR OF AUDIENCE HALL OF CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS
Trier, Germany. Early 4th century CE.

the nave and the apse. In a concession to the northern climate, the building was centrally heated with hot air flowing under the floor, a technique also used in Roman baths. The windows of the apse create an interesting optical effect. Slightly smaller than the windows in straight side walls, they create the illusion of greater distance, so that the tetrarch enthroned in the apse would appear larger than life and the hall would seem longer than it actually is.

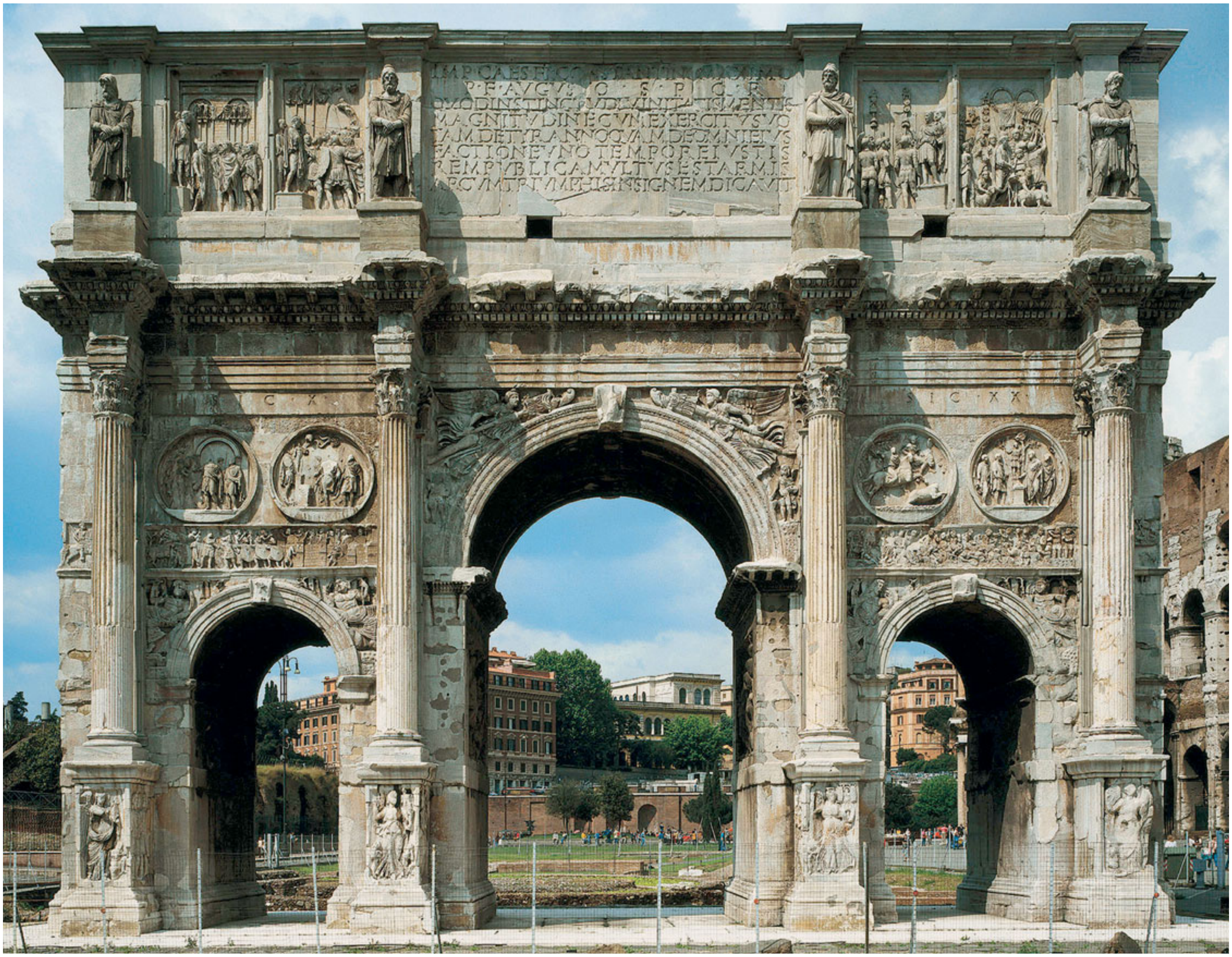
CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

In 305 CE, Diocletian abdicated and forced his fellow Augustus, Maximian, to do so too. The orderly succession he had planned for failed to occur, and a struggle for position and advantage followed almost immediately. Two main contenders appeared in the Western Empire: Maximian's son Maxentius, and Constantine, son of Tetrarch Constantius Chlorus. Constantine emerged victorious in 312, defeating Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge at the entrance to Rome.

According to Christian tradition, Constantine had a vision the night before the battle in which he saw a flaming cross in the sky and heard these words: "In this sign you shall conquer." The next morning he ordered that his army's shields and standards be inscribed with the monogram XP (the Greek letters *chi* and *rho*, standing for *Christos*). The victorious Constantine then showed his gratitude by ending the persecution of Christians and recognizing Christianity as a lawful religion. He may have been influenced in that decision by his mother, Helena, a devout Christian—later canonized. Whatever his motivation, in 313 CE, together with Licinius, who ruled the Eastern Empire, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, a model of religious toleration.

The Edict granted freedom to all religious groups, not just Christians. Constantine, however, remained the Pontifex Maximus of Rome's state religion and also reaffirmed his devotion to the military's favorite god, Mithras, and to the Invincible Sun, Sol Invictus, a manifestation of Helios Apollo, the sun god. In 324 CE, Constantine defeated Licinius, his last rival, and ruled as sole emperor until his death in 337. He made the port city of Byzantium the new capital of the Roman Empire after his last visit to Rome in 325, and renamed the city after himself—Constantinople (present-day Istanbul, in Turkey). Rome, which had already ceased to be the seat of government in the West, further declined in importance.

THE ARCH OF CONSTANTINE In Rome, next to the Colosseum, the Senate erected a triumphal arch to commemorate Constantine's victory over Maxentius (**FIG. 6–65**), a huge, triple arch that dwarfs the nearby Arch of Titus (see FIG. 6–36). Its three barrel-vaulted passageways are flanked by columns on high pedestals and surmounted by a large attic story with elaborate sculptural decoration and a laudatory inscription: "To the Emperor Constantine from the Senate and the Roman People. Since through divine inspiration and great wisdom he has delivered the state from the tyrant and his party by his army and noble arms, [we] dedicate this arch, decorated with triumphal insignia." The "triumphal insignia" were in part appropriated from earlier monuments made for Constantine's illustrious predecessors—Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius. The reused items visually transferred the old Roman virtues of strength, courage, and piety associated with these earlier exemplary emperors to Constantine

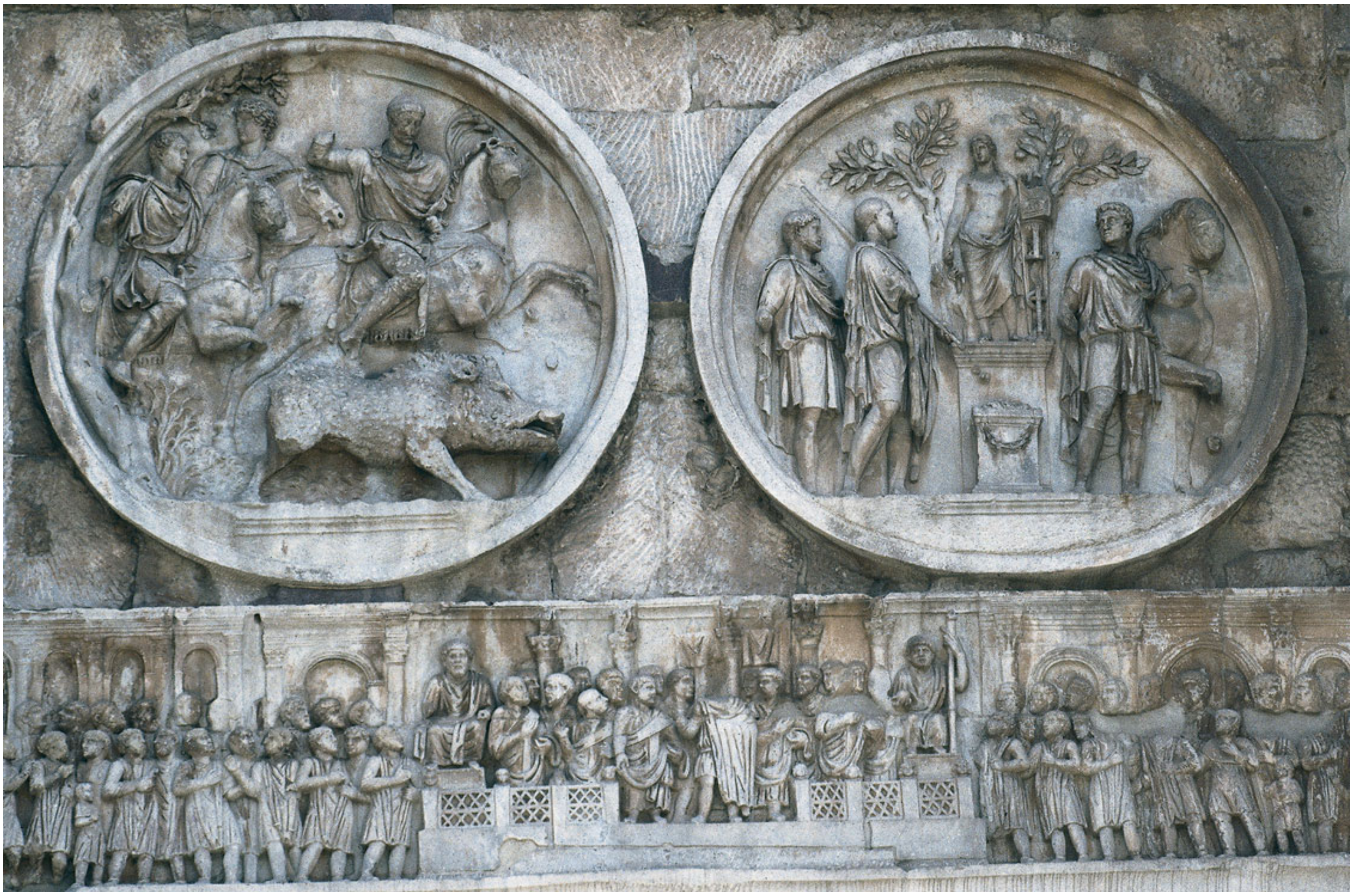


6–65 • ARCH OF CONSTANTINE
Rome. 312–315 CE (dedicated July 25, 315). 69′ × 85′ (21 × 26 m).

This massive, triple-arched monument to Emperor Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312 CE is a wonder of recycled sculpture. On the attic story, flanking the inscription over the central arch, are relief panels taken from a monument celebrating the victory of Marcus Aurelius over the Germans in 174 CE. On the attached piers framing these panels are large statues of prisoners made to celebrate Trajan's victory over the Dacians in the early second century CE. On the inner walls of the central arch and on the attic of the short sides (neither seen here) are reliefs also commemorating Trajan's conquest of Dacia. Over each of the side arches is a pair of large tondi (circular compositions) taken from a monument to Hadrian (see FIG. 6–66). The rest of the decoration is early fourth century CE, contemporary with the arch.

himself. New reliefs were made for the arch to recount the story of Constantine's victory and to symbolize his own power and generosity. They run in strips underneath the reused Hadrianic tondi (a tondo is a circular composition) (**FIG. 6–66**).

Although the new Constantinian reliefs reflect the long-standing Roman predilection for depicting important events with recognizable detail, they nevertheless represent a significant change in style, approach, and subject matter (see lower figural frieze in FIG. 6–65). In this scene of Constantine addressing the Roman people in the Roman Forum, the Constantinian reliefs are easily distinguished from the reused Hadrianic tondi mounted just above them because of the faithfulness of the new reliefs to the avant-garde tetrarchic style we have already encountered in portraiture. The forceful, blocky, mostly frontal figures are compressed into the foreground plane. The participants to the sides, below the enthroned Constantine (his head is missing), almost congeal into a uniformly patterned mass that isolates the new emperor and connects him visually with the seated statues of his illustrious predecessors flanking him on the dais. This two-dimensional, hierarchical approach with its emphasis on authority and power



6–66 • HADRIAN/CONSTANTINE HUNTING BOAR AND SACRIFICING TO APOLLO; CONSTANTINE ADDRESSING THE ROMAN PEOPLE IN THE ROMAN FORUM

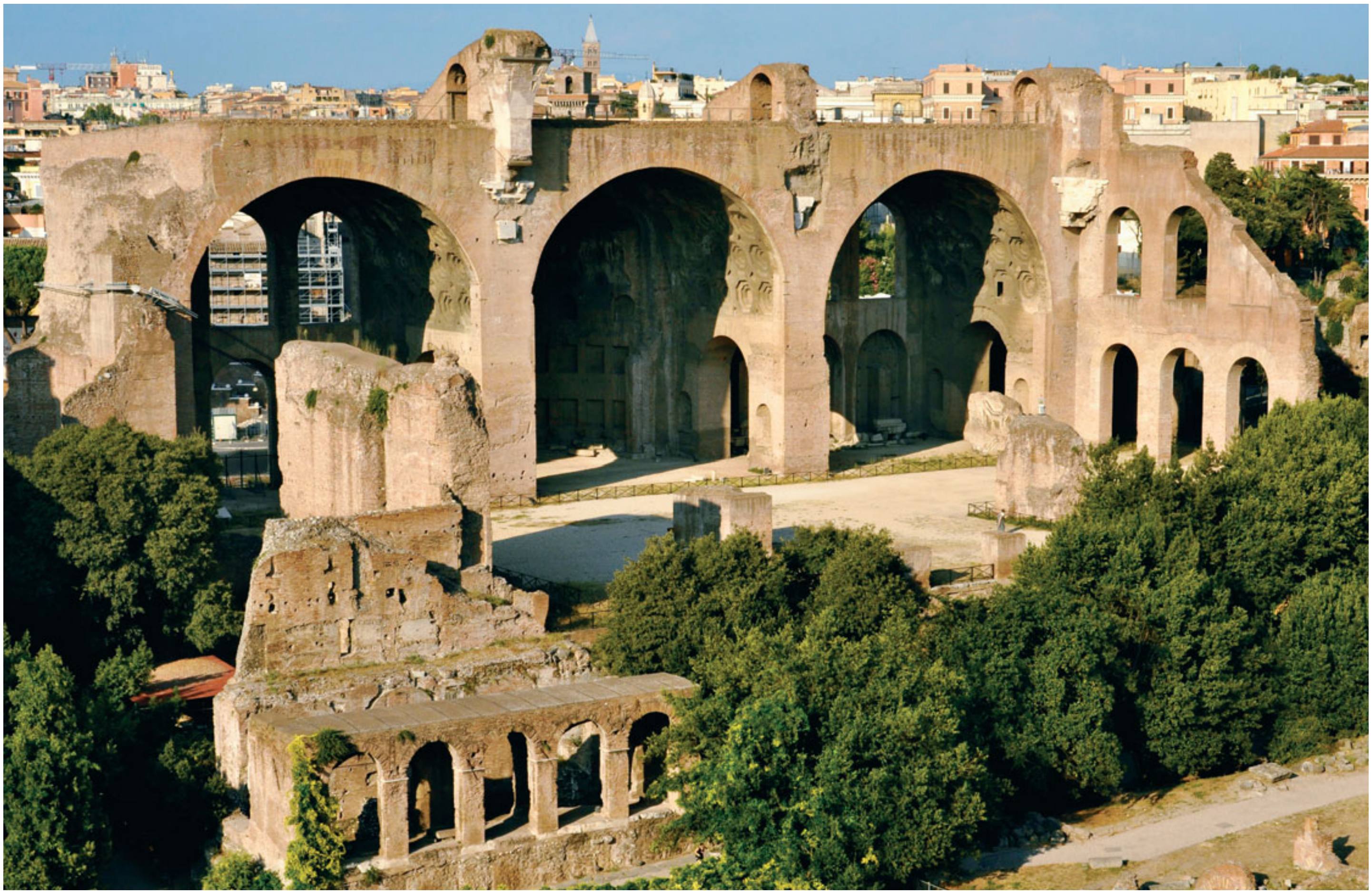
Tondi made for a monument to Hadrian and reused on the Arch of Constantine. c. 130–138 CE. Marble, diameter 6′6″ (2 m). Frieze by Constantinian sculptors 312–315 CE. Marble, height 3′4″ (1 m).

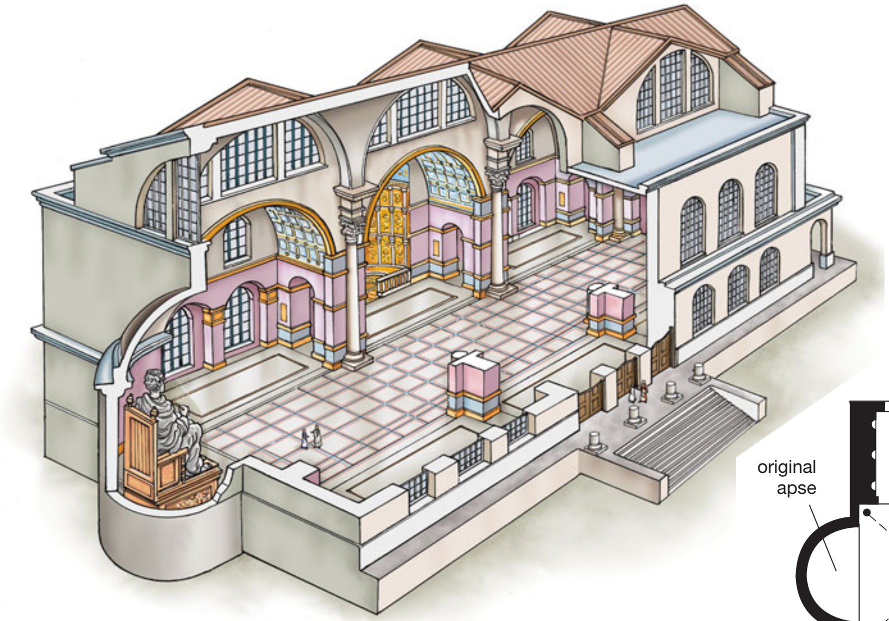
The two tondi were originally part of a lost monument erected by the emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138 CE). The boar hunt demonstrates his courage and physical prowess, and his sacrificial offering to Apollo shows his piety and gratitude to the gods for their support. The classicizing heads, form-enhancing drapery, and graceful poses of the figures betray a debt to the style of Late Classical Greek art. In the fourth century CE, Constantine appropriated these tondi, had Hadrian's head recarved with his own or his father's features, and incorporated them into his own triumphal arch (see FIG. 6–65) so that the power and piety of this predecessor could reflect on him and his reign. In a strip of relief underneath the tondi, sculptors from his own time portrayed a ceremony performed by Constantine during his celebration of the victory over his rival, Maxentius, at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312 CE). Rather than the Hellenizing mode popular during Hadrian's reign, the Constantinian sculptors employ the blocky and abstract stylizations that became fashionable during the Tetrarchy.

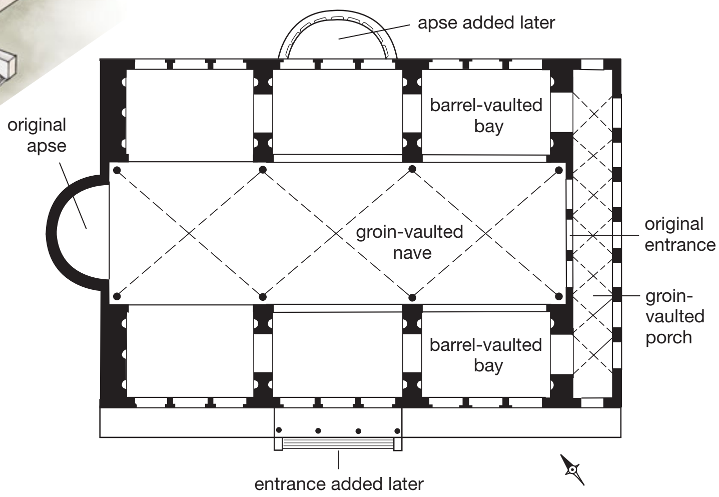
rather than on individualized outward form is far removed from the classicizing illusionism of earlier imperial reliefs. It is one of the Roman styles that will be adopted by the emerging Christian Church.

THE BASILICA NOVA Constantine's rival Maxentius, who controlled Rome throughout his short reign (r. 306–312), ordered the repair of older buildings there and had new ones built. His most impressive undertaking was a huge new basilica, just southeast of the Imperial Forums, called the **BASILICA NOVA**, or New Basilica (**FIG. 6–67**). Now known as the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine, this was the last important imperial government building erected in Rome. Like all basilicas, it functioned as an administrative center and provided a magnificent setting for the emperor when he appeared as supreme judge.

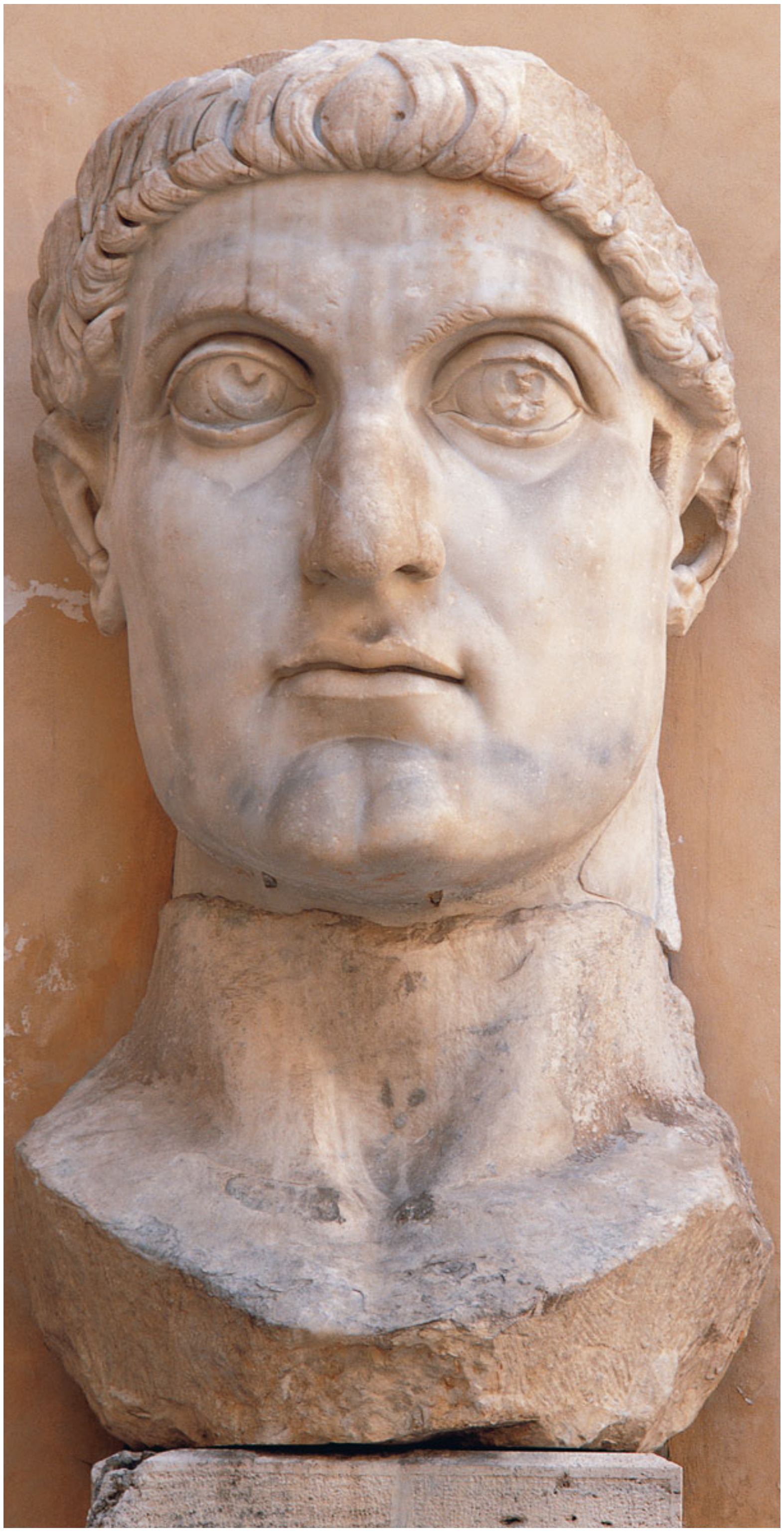
Earlier basilicas, such as Trajan's Basilica Ulpia (see FIG. 6–44), had been columnar halls, but Maxentius ordered his engineers to create the kind of large, unbroken, vaulted space found in public baths. The central hall was covered with groin vaults, and the side aisles were covered with lower barrel vaults that acted as buttresses, or projecting supports, for the central vault and allowed generous window openings in the clerestory areas over the side walls.






apse added later
barrel-vaulted bay
original apse
groin-vaulted nave
original entrance
groin-vaulted porch
barrel-vaulted bay
entrance added later

6–67 • VIEW (A), RECONSTRUCTION (B), AND PLAN (C) OF THE BASILICA OF MAXENTIUS AND CONSTANTINE (BASILICA NOVA)
Rome. 306–313 CE.



6–68 • CONSTANTINE THE GREAT
From the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine, Rome. 325–326 CE.
Marble, height of head 8′6″ (2.6 m). Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome.

Three of these brick-and-concrete barrel vaults still loom over the streets of present-day Rome (see FIG. 6–67A). The basilica originally measured 300 by 215 feet and the vaults of the central nave rose to a height of 114 feet. A groin-vaulted porch extended across the short side and sheltered a triple entrance to the central hall. At the opposite end of the long axis of the hall was an apse of the same width, which acted as a focal point for the building (see FIGS. 6–67B, 6–67C). Such directional focus along a central axis from entrance to apse was adopted by Christians for use in basilican churches.

Constantine, seeking to impress the people of Rome with visible symbols of his authority, put his own stamp on projects Maxentius had started, including this one. He may have changed the orientation of the Basilica Nova by adding an imposing new entrance in the center of the long side facing the Via Sacra and a giant apse facing it across the three aisles. He also commissioned a colossal, 30-foot statue of himself to be placed inside within an apse (**FIG. 6–68**). Sculptors used white marble for the head, chest, arms, and legs, and sheets of bronze for the drapery, all supported on a wooden frame. This statue became a permanent stand-in for the emperor, representing him whenever the conduct of business legally required his presence. The head combines features of traditional Roman portraiture with some of the abstract qualities evident in images of the tetrarchs (see FIG. 6–61). The defining characteristics of Constantine's face—his heavy jaw, hooked nose, and jutting chin—have been incorporated into a stylized, symmetrical pattern in which other features, such as his eyes, eyebrows, and hair, have been simplified into repeated geometric arcs. The result is a work that projects imperial power and dignity with no hint of human frailty or imperfection.

ROMAN ART AFTER CONSTANTINE

Although Constantine was baptized only on his deathbed in 337, Christianity had become the official religion of the empire by the end of the fourth century, and non-Christians had become targets of persecution. This religious shift, however, did not diminish Roman interest in the artistic traditions of their pagan Classical past. A large silver **PLATTER** dating from the mid fourth century CE (**FIG. 6–69**) proves that artists working for Christian patrons continued to use pagan themes, allowing them the opportunity to create elaborate figural compositions displaying the nude or lightly draped human body in complex, dynamic poses. The platter was found in a cache of silver tableware near Mildenhall, England, including spoons engraved with Christian symbols. The original owner of the hoard was likely to have been a wealthy Roman Christian, living in the provinces. Such opulent items were often hidden or buried to protect them from theft and looting, a sign of the breakdown of the Roman peace, especially in provincial areas (see "The Mildenhall Treasure," page 212).

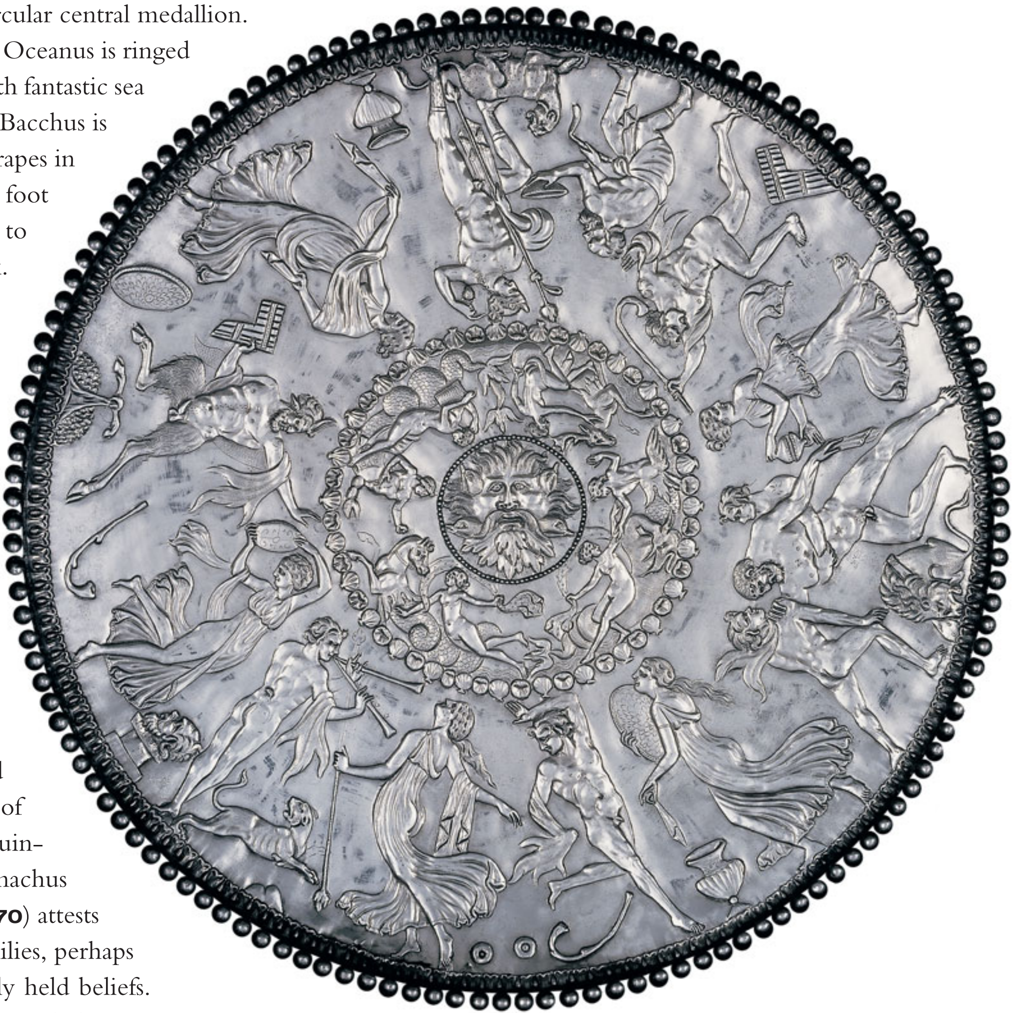
RECOVERING THE PAST | The Mildenhall Treasure

In 1942, a farmer plowing a field outside the town of Mildenhall in Suffolk, England, located near the site of an ancient Roman villa, accidentally made one of the greatest archaeological finds of the twentieth century. In total he unearthed 34 pieces of Roman silver dating from the fourth century CE. The find was not made public until four years later, since the farmer and his associates claimed they were unaware of how valuable it was, both materially and historically. When word of the discovery leaked out, however, the silver was confiscated by the government to determine if it was a "Treasure Trove"—gold or silver objects that have been intentionally hidden (rather than, for example, included in a burial) and that by law belong not to the finder, but to the Crown. The silver found at Mildenhall was deemed a "Treasure Trove" and is now one of the great glories of the British Museum in London.

This is the official story of the discovery at Mildenhall. But there are those who do not believe it. None of the silver in the hoard showed any sign of having been dented by a plow, and some believe that the quality and style of the objects are inconsistent with a provincial Roman context, especially so far in the hinterlands in England. Could the treasure have been looted from Italy during World War II, brought back to England (Mildenhall is not far from an American airfield), and buried to set up a staged discovery? The farmer who discovered the hoard and his associates, some argue, changed their story several times over the course of its history. Most scholars do believe the official story—that the silver was buried quickly for safekeeping by wealthy provincial Romans in Britain who felt threatened by a possible invasion or attack, and was forgotten (perhaps its owners were killed in the expected turmoil) until its accidental discovery in 1942. But when the history of art is founded on undocumented archaeological finds, there is usually room for doubt.

View the Closer Look for a platter from the Mildenhall Treasure on myartslab.com

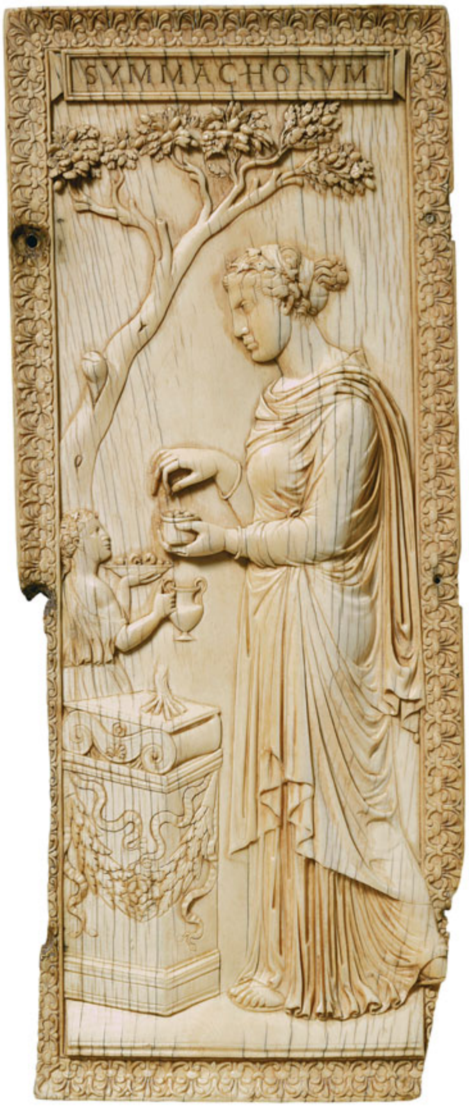
The Bacchic revelers on this platter whirl, leap, and sway in a dance to the piping of satyrs around a circular central medallion. In the centerpiece, the head of the sea god Oceanus is ringed by nude females frolicking in the waves with fantastic sea creatures. In the outer circle, the figure of Bacchus is the one stable element. With a bunch of grapes in his right hand, a krater at his feet, and one foot on the haunches of his panther, he listens to a male follower begging for another drink. Only a few figures away, the pitifully drunken hero Hercules has lost his lion-skin mantle and collapsed in a stupor into the supporting arms of two satyrs. The detail, clarity, and liveliness of this platter reflect the work of a virtuoso artist. Deeply engraved lines emphasize the contours of the subtly modeled bodies, echoing the technique of **undercutting** used to add depth to figures in stone and marble reliefs and suggesting a connection between silver-working and relief sculpture.



6–69 • PLATTER

From Mildenhall, England. Mid 4th century CE. Silver, diameter approx. 24″ (61 cm). British Museum, London.

Not all Romans, however, converted to Christianity. Among the champions of paganism were the Roman patricians Quintus Aurelius Symmachus and Virius Nicomachus Flavianus. A famous ivory diptych (**FIG. 6–70**) attests to the close relationship between their families, perhaps through marriage, as well as to their firmly held beliefs. A **diptych** was a pair of panels attached with hinges, not unlike the modest object held by the woman in FIG. 6–35, but in this case made of a very precious material and



6–70 • PRIESTESS OF BACCHUS (?)
Right panel of the diptych of Symmachus and Nicomachus. c. 390–401 CE.
Ivory, 11¾″ × 4¾″ (29.9 × 12 cm). Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

carved with reliefs on the exterior sides. On the interior of a diptych there were shallow, traylike recessions filled with wax, into which messages could be written with a stylus and sent with a servant as a letter to a friend or acquaintance, who could then smooth out the wax surface, incise a reply with his or her own stylus, and send the diptych back to its owner with the servant. Here one family's name is inscribed at the top of each panel. On the panel inscribed "Symmachorum" (illustrated here), a stately, elegantly attired priestess burns incense at a beautifully decorated altar. On her head is a wreath of ivy, sacred to Bacchus. She is assisted by a small child, and the event takes place out of doors under an oak tree, sacred to Jupiter. Like the silversmiths, Roman ivory carvers of the fourth century CE were highly skillful, and their work was widely admired. For conservative patrons like the Nicomachus and Symmachus families, they imitated the Augustan style effortlessly. The exquisite rendering of the drapery and foliage recalls the reliefs of the Ara Pacis (see FIG. 6–22).

Classical subject matter remained attractive to artists and patrons throughout the late Roman period. Even such great Christian thinkers as the fourth-century CE bishop Gregory of Nazianzus spoke out in support of the right of the people to appreciate and enjoy their Classical heritage, so long as they were not seduced by it to return to pagan practices. As a result, stories of the ancient gods and heroes entered the secular realm as lively, visually delightful, even erotic decorative elements. As Roman authority gave way to local rule by powerful "barbarian" tribes in much of the West, many people continued to appreciate Classical learning and to treasure Greek and Roman art. In the East, Classical traditions and styles were cultivated to become an enduring element of Byzantine art.

THINK ABOUT IT

6.1 Characterize the salient stylistic features of the murals that survive from Roman houses in Pompeii, discussing specific examples from this chapter.

6.2 Explain how the Roman interest in portraits grew out of early funeral rituals and developed into a powerful aspect of imperial self-fashioning.

6.3 Describe and evaluate the subjects used in Etruscan tomb paintings and sarcophagi. How do Etruscan practices relate to what we have discovered about tombs in other ancient cultures?

6.4 Identify two key structural advances made by Roman builders and discuss their use in one large civic building. Why do you think the ancient Romans built on such a large scale?

CROSSCURRENTS

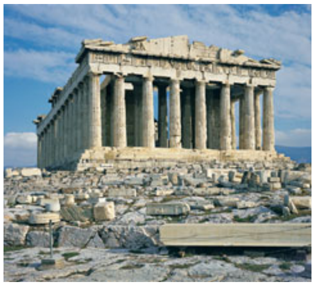


FIG. 5–36

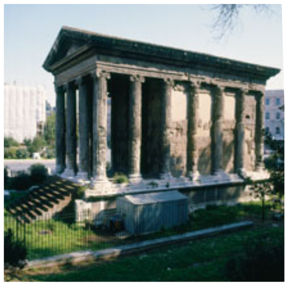


FIG. 6–18A

Greek and Roman temples have features in common, but they are fundamentally different in important respects. Evaluate the significant similarities and dissimilarities by comparing these two buildings.

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